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MODERN IRISH DRAMATISTS

Submitted by

Katherine Griffin

(A.B., Boston University, 1923)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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MODERN IRISH DRAMATISTS

Modern Irish poets, dramatists, essayists, and short-story writers have not neglected the ancient literature of Ireland. In the old Gaelic romances they have recognized valuable themes and have found in them inspiration for the writing of modern poetry and drama, especially. Ancient Irish literature abounds in interesting tales and legends of a period following the literary enterprises of the Old World which became extinct, and the era just preceding the birth of the literature of modern Europe; consequently, the many annals, chronicles, and histories of a country whose culture and civilization were established long before Christianization, together with the antiquarian romances and tales of Celtic origin, substantiate the claim that Ireland was indeed a civilized nation in times most ancient.

Great has been the influence of Irish literature upon nations. This influence is difficult to evaluate directly, yet it is generally supposed that the Continent was greatly affected by the literature of a country itself untouched by the Roman civilization but producing great scholars in the modern world. With the coming of St. Patrick in 432 and the abolition of Druidism, symbolized by the breaking down of the pagan idol, Crom Cruach, Ireland became a great literary country; she won for herself the title of the isle of saints and scholars and from the sixth to the tenth centuries retained that honor. In the tenth and eleventh centuries Irish literature influenced Welsh, Breton, and French literature. Fame of her erudition and scholarly institutions attracted men then anxious to bear aloft the torch of learning. Ireland send a number of scholars to France, Germany, and taly during the Merovingian and Carlovingian times and the

Irish instructors were looked upon as possessors of a literature of great value. The beautiful literature of Ireland had untold influence upon the countries with which it came in contact, and that influence was felt principally through the Gaelic legends and tales of herioc sagas.

This old glorious and splendid literature of Ireland for a time, after winning much renown and triumph, faded into obscurity and would doubtless have become extinct were it not for the peasants of Connaught. The onfall of the Danes and the Norman Conquest brought about a decline in Irish development; much of the Gaelic literature would be lost were it not for the peasants who cherished the old Celtic writings and the scholars who preserved them so that today they may be found in libraries of Europe.

The great period of Celtic literary production is that done from the twelfth century through the sixteenth. All the romances, though written during this epoch, were based upon a much earlier period, probably before 650. "The Book of the Dun Cow", containing the epic "Tain Bo Cuailgne", the Cattle Raid of Cooley, is the finest epic of the Ulster cycle. It contains the great medieval romances and comprises Ireland's most renowned contribution to the literature of the universe.

One of the best known stories of the Ulster cycle, which deals with the adventures of kings and heroes of the upper classes, is the legend of Cuchulain,--"Comhlaidir le Cuchulain". Named the Strong, for his bravery and strength in killing the smith's watch-dog, in payment for slaying this dog of Culann, Cuchulain had to wait a year and a day watching for a pup to grow,- the pup to replace the slain dog. At last he set out for the Isle of Skye and, under the instruction of the witch Sgathach, learned much in regard

to arms. So skilled did Cuchulain become that Sgathach's daughter was defeated by him. Aoife and Cuchulain loved each other. Cuchulain was told by Aoife that a child was to be born of them; Cuchulain instructed Aoife to keep the child, if it be a boy, until he thumb had grown large enough to fill a ring which Cuchulain gave her. Then the child was to be sent to him in Ireland. Being a boy, the child was trained by Aoife in all the feats of arms except that in which his father, Cuchulain, was skilled. He was sent to Ireland, pledging to keep his identity unknown. The son of Aoife defeated man after man in combat, and continued to be champion of all, until Cuchulain came upon the scene and killed him. True to his pledge, Connlioch (for that was the name of the champion) would not reveal his name until he lay dying, slain by the hand of Cuchulain, his father, who, in lamentable song, bemoans his act and thus the dramatic narrative comes to a close.

Another great romance of the Ulster cycle, a Druidic romance, is "Aided Chlorinne Uisnig", Death of the Sons of Usnech, - Deirdre's lament. This story has become one of the greatest tales of love in the world and has been the source of inspiration for plays by Synge and Yeats, dramatists in the Celtic revival.

The tales of the Ulster cycle give much information regarding the social history of Irish civilization; in this cycle of Northern Ireland may be found many accounts of the morals, customs, and habits of the people of the late Celtic period. To the folk-lorist, historian, and Irish antiquarian they furnish date of unfathomable importance.

The Fenian or Ossianic cycle of the south contains ballads and romances about the deeds of Fion and Oisin, based upon a period later than that of the northern cycle, and dealing with the ad-

ventures and deeds of the "fianna", the warriors, and the people. Though generally speaking, this cycle is of less literary value than the cycle of Ulster, it abounds in ballads, lullabies, delightful lyrics, and stories of fairies as well as the exploits and adventures of the two for whom the cycle is named. The Irish produced excellent and noble romance. A tale is told of Ossian's final conversion to Christianity after his lonely wanderings in his own land, having earlier gone away with a fairy woman.

The old heroic Irish sagas have great force to stir the imagination, great power, vividness, humor, and lightness of spirit; they are truly optimistic, yet this optimism is tinged with an element of melancholy. Their foibles lie only in their endless wandering, their repetition, verbosity of description, and length. We cherish these romances to a great degree, and although the original tales may be greatly modified in our time with frequent substitutions for the heroes Fion, Cuchulain, and Oisin, we recognize the excellence and merit in the general theme of the Irish folklore and sing unceasing praises to the heroes of those great epics.

In spite of the heavy handicaps, deprivation of printing, of education of her native tongue, the oppression of the English upon Ireland, constant turmoil, strife, and dissension, Ireland made noble endeavors during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to better her conditions and to educate herself, regardless of the Penal Laws. She was hampered by persecution, and the famous poets of this period in melancholy tones and lamentable expressions make known their country's affliction, and complain bitterly against the English policies. Of this period O'Hussey, Keating, MacFirbis, and O'Clery are the most prolific writers of

religious and historical works as well as poetry, similar to that of the bardic compositions, in simple, tender, delicate verses, indicative of their sorrows and losses.

With the language fast dying, the hopes and aspirations of the Gaelic race shrinking away amid the calamity of the famine, is it small wonder that Irish literature approaches a marked decline in the nineteenth century? True, the patriotic songs, runes and love songs of much melody, expressing the great devotion and tenderness of the Gaelic spirit, were composed by the bards, but these were simply written, many anonymously, and won no conspicuous place in the field of literature. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that an attempt to rescue the Irish language from its utter decline was made. A revival of Irish nationality was effected, noble efforts to arouse the patriotism of the Irishman and to stimulate him to create a new Ireland, Irish to the core, were deliberately attempted; a rebirth of Irish spirit resulted, the Celtic Revival was begun.

The rebirth of the Celtic spirit on Ireland has brought back into extraordinary prominence, through the works of her poets and dramatists, much of the early fairy folk and the world connected with the myths and legends of their country. "The Wee People", as they are known to the Irish, have also been the source of an abundance of literature by American and English writers. These good spirits and demons live in Celtic imagination even today in spite of Christianity and the abolition of paganism from the isles. So deeply imbedded in the minds of the Gaels have been these fairy legends of the magic people, that the belief in them has not been completely eradicated from the Irish imagination and today there persists in remote places of Ireland, the same belief in fairy

folk, long ago held lovingly cherished in imagination of their former inhabitants.

The brownies, elves, pixies, kelpies, gnomes, goblins, and trolls abound in the fairy world of Gaelic literature. The banshee (from the Gaelic term sheehoque), is the most popular name for the fairy people. The leprechaun, a wealthy fairy shoemaker, is a kind of Irish fairy about whom there is much superstition. It is common belief that if his cap is snatched, to bring about its return he will grant any wish mortal can make. But he is sly and tricky, and may play pranks upon mortals without fulfilling his promise.

That the fairies have danced and celebrated gay festivals, possibly May Eve or Midsummer Eve, is evidenced by the circle of dried grass on a field. Hallowe'en is celebrated in a less gay fashion; on that evening they are said to affect a gloomy atmosphere and dance with spectres and ghosts. It is on Hallow's Eve that the graves are open and the dead walk about.

The fairy changeling, which W. B. Yeats writes about excellently in "The Land of Heart's Desire", is the child substituted for the mortal that the "Little Folk" have stolen, because of mortals' association with them. This fairy changeling, according to legendary lore, might at any time return to the "Little People" in their hollow glens.

Evil sprites were Geancanach, (love-talker) who wandered through the country making idle love to the country maids and symbolized bad luck; Clobher-ceann, the sprite omnipresent in the drunkard's cellar; Dullaghan, the cemetery demon with a movable head; and the Pooka, similar to the Puck or Robin Goodfellow of Shakespeare and Milton. The monstrous dragon, Piast, so popular

in the days of the Fenian cycle, and said to have been exiled by St. Patrick to the marshes and glens of Hibernia, awaits final judgment at the end of the world. The Beansighes (banshees) were believed to have warned families of the approach of Death, and Merrows (mermaids) were said to have married mortals.

Dreaming of fairies was considered by men to be bad, by women to be good. To women it meant probably marriage, to men it signified ill omen regarding serious undertaking, dire misfortune. A piece of iron, nailed to a house or to the bottom of a butter churn, was protection against the bad spirits, or sewed into a babe's garments and left there until its baptism, it made the child secure from kidnappers. Cats and rats are believed to have influenced old Irish people; these animals were evil spirits and could summon support from those of their tribes in animal life when occasion demanded or they willed. For their magic and mysterious powers they were placed in the category of the fairy folk.

That the Irish as a race loved learning has already been proved in the reference to Irish history mentioned. The production of innumerable scholars throughout the ages from the time of pagan Druidism when the Druid was the teacher and adviser of learning, through the great era of learning which won for Ireland the title-land of "Saints and Scholars" has been sufficient proof that the Irish have always possessed an insatiate desire for knowledge. They built and maintained colleges on the continent, at Paris, Bordeauz, Toulouse, Antwerp, Donai, Rome and Seville, some which are in existence today. The Irish scribe and the hedgeschoolmaster cannot be forgotten. The scribe diligently labored at night copying poems, tales and treatises to preserve for us today the fast fading records of a dying literature. And the hedgeschoolmaster, working in the open under the hedge, under unfavor-

able circumstances and all sorts of difficulties, trained his students in the odes of Horaces and the poems of Virgil. Denied an education, the clerical student, in the days of penal laws, was forced to seek an education in another land. He satisfied his craving for acquisition of knowledge and brought fame and academic honors to his native land.

A characteristic more racial than the love of learning among the Irish people is their trait of wit and wisdom. Quickness in fancy, merriment, jocoseness, and pleasantry are inborn features with the Irish more than any other race; they have been endowed with a genial spirit, a happy, jovial disposition, light heartedness, a kind of wit that is mirthful, an exhilarating humor, and a jest that drives away all cares.

This innate trait is reflected in the literature of Ireland and has found expression in the works of Charles Lever, Maria Edgeworth, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Sheridan, and Thomas Moore, who as literary geniuses, portray to perfection the sunny side and light disposition of the Irishman. The works of these Irish and Anglo-Irish writers radiate the buoyancy and gayety of the Irish spirit; they vividly depict the characteristics of the native of the Emerald Isle and show his inherently jocose temperament. The prose and verse of Ireland exhibit the Irishman as the possessor of a faculty of deep mirth, a heritage of keen humor and sweet wit.

Dramatists and poets affiliated with the Celtic Renaissance and active in the Irish literary revival have drawn themes from the heroic sagas of the Erse legends. As evidence to them, the Irish are racially very merry and mirthful; this mirth, however, contains an element of melancholy; their optimism is overshadowed by a touch of the weird and the uncanny. Synge and Yeats especially, disclose

the strange dualism of the Irish character as being a mixture of tears and laughter, though they do not wholly deny the spirit of Irish comedy.

The very soul of the Irishman is portrayed most noticeably in the poetry of words and the poetry of music. The greatest outlet of emotion is music; the more imaginative the race, the greater the musical expression. Music and poetry are kinsmen. Even in the days of pre-Christianity in Ireland, music and poetry were indispensable, for all the Irish Celts were fond of it and were skilled in it; they cultivated a musical taste and gave expression to it by playing proficiently on the harp and becoming celebrated musicians. The universality of song became famous in the time of St. Patrick, for music and poetry were at that era and thereafter, identified with religion. Sacred and secular music was sweetly and pleasingly sung by the bards, minstrels, and harpers. Music came to be a greater institution in Ireland than it had been in its Druid days of thriving. A musical school was established at San Gallen and Irish monks traveled to European countries to instruct their less cultured contemporaries in music.

Through all the periods of Irish history the harpers have been distinguished as singers of beautiful melodies of their time. Melodies of charm and grace were ever popular, affected, always by the social life of the people. During the periods of sorrow the music adopted a lamentable tune and took on the atmosphere of suffering; during periods of happiness nationally, the exquisite airs were affected accordingly.

Love of nature is another characteristic influential upon the literature - old and modernof Ireland. Its geographical location and natural beauty are responsible for the poets, Sagas, novelists,

and dramatists' selecting subject matter showing deeply the Irishman's love of nature. Detailed descriptions, single pictures, vivid epithets, powerful words of portrayal, descriptions of summer scenes, mention of the stars, the moon, the verdure of the land, its lakes, its birds, and trees, all appealed to the Irish writer; all appealed to the Irish reader. He loved nature; he utilized his powers of imagery enthusiastically. From the early Irish Celts down to the present, beauty and charm of natural beauty in all types of literature have been appreciated, and we find Synge in "Riders to the Sea" stressing the powers of the ocean, and writing other glorious drama of the Aran Islands and of the desolation of Connaught.

Until the seventeenth century Latin and Irish were the chief literary mediums of Irish expression. Practically nothing of any startling significance or importance was written by the Irish in the English language until that period of much renown in Irish history, the era noted for its production of great literary men, the seventeenth century. Stanihurst, a native Irishman, may be remembered for his powerful verses and his translations of the first four books of Virgil, and it is true Spenser's "View of the Present State of Ireland" and Hanner's "Chronicle" mark the beginning of works in the English language written in Ireland, but with the seventeenth century came a stronger literature, not wholly in Irish, but to a great extent, in English. It was not until the appearance of Molyneux that a native of Ireland, using the English language as his literary medium, wrote effectively for the cause of Ireland. Molyneux, a scientist and philosopher, a writer of great repute, in his bold and daring "Case of Ireland", caused a turmoil in the literary and political fields of his

native land. He, the first of his countrymen to write for Ireland in the English tongue, plead the case of Ireland and effected much reaction against the politics of his country by affirming the legislative independence of the Irish parliament.

In the narrative of English literature will be found the names of eminent Irish writers - Wentworth, Dillon, Roger Boyle, Denham, Tate, Brady, Flecknoe, Farquhar (one of the outstanding dramatists of the Restoration period) Richard Steele, the essayist, and Parnell, the poet. Though born in the Emerald Isle, these men did not write of the Irish soil; they sought impulse elsewhere, - loyal to England; to England, then, they dedicated their literary undertakings; from her alone they sought praise.

Jonathan Swift in Ireland during the eighteenth century allowed his writings to taste of the country of his birth, to no slight degree. His Irish life and Irish surroundings are reflected in many of his works, in spite of their direct ownership's being England's, and his translations from the Irish cannot be disputed as not savoring of Irish wisdom. In Dublin were born Thomas Moore, Steele, the renowned essayist, Richard Sheridan, the dramatist, and Edmund Burke. Oliver Goldsmith came from Ireland, and also Lawrence Sterne; in fact, English literature is indebted to Ireland for many of its most distinguished writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Of the nineteenth century Thomas Moore, the songster, Oscar Wilde, the dramatist genius, and Maria Edgeworth, the originator of the Anglo-Irish novel, are the most conspicuous contributors to English literature who received inspirations from things Irish. Maria Edgeworth's novels - "Castle Rackrent" and "Absentee", and

Moore's "Irish Melodies" are the best examples of Anglo-Irish literature of this period which were in themselves Irish in theme and Irish in purpose. About the middle of the nineteenth century, after the great famine, when the spirit of Irish nationality was ebbing and the Gaelic language was fast becoming extinct, because of the persecutions and depressions of that era, staunch young Ireland movement writers published "The Nation" in 1842, in the English language. The purpose of the paper was to revive things Irish and to effect an awakening of the spirit of Irish nationality. Sir Thomas Moore, by popularizing old Irish songs, became a great propagandist of this movement. He took the beautiful old Irish tunes and to them wrote melodious lyrics and songs, the most passionate and melodious songs that the English language had ever fostered. These melodies were manifestly Irish in spirit and in feeling. Sung especially by the cultured classes in whose drawing-rooms they were most favorably received, they revealed national character, lamented the oppressions and disastrous past of Ireland, and made straight a pathway for succeeding writers whose ideals, aspirations, and ambitions were as lofty as Moore's and whose audiences were to be mainly Irish. Sullivan, Mangan, Duffy, and Davis, Callahan, and Burke, all produced poetry inspired by Irish feelings and hopes for the future. They brought from obscurity the literature of the past and so stirred the patriotism of the Irish that a new literature was brought into prominence.

There was a distinctive group of novelists, also, who participated in this movement and upheld the ideals of Moore and his strong followers. Of the novelists are: Samuel Lover, Charles Lever, Sheridan Le Fanu, Carleton (who wrote understandingly of the Irish peasants in "Traits and Stories of Irish Peasantry"),

and Gerald Griffin, popular poet and novelist. Then, too, the poetry of the latter period of the nineteenth century was made famous by several outstanding Irish scholars: Samuel Ferguson (1810-1886), antiquary and poet, translated old Celtic treasures into English; William Allingham (1824-1889) delved into Irish fairy love and mythology for his poetic fairy themes; Aubrey de Vere (1814-1902) brought glories to Ireland for his remarkable Catholic poems, and Standish O'Grady won much fame for his commendable translations.

And so during the last generation the Gaelic movement has consisted of a revival of the Irish past and the creation of a distinctly Irish national literature written in the English language. It actually began with the work of the poets already mentioned and was continued, manifesting itself in the usual forms of poetry, narration, and the drama, by such courageous and persevering personages as George Moore, W. B. Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory. Yeats, particularly, revived old Celtic mythology and romance, and showed himself skillful in intermingling in his poetry romance with folk-lore. His "Wanderings of Oisin" marks the beginning of this Celtic dawn.

The founding of the Gaelic League in 1893 at Dublin using the moribund Irish language as a basis, served as a great stimulus to the promoters of the Celtic Renaissance. The league was established for the purpose of reviving and preserving the Irish language, old Irish culture, literature, and ideals; a modern Irish literature was to be cultivated. Ireland was to be "Irish-ized" and made racy of its soil. Under the leadership of Douglas Hyde, poet, dramatist, and student of Celtic folk-lore, the union struggled, overpowered the mocks and jeers of the populace, and

reawakened the fast withering Irish spirit of nationality. Ireland took on a new lease of life; the study of things Irish was carried on with great zeal and enthusiasm; the Irish language was revived in the schools; the study of Irish literature came to be appreciated, and as a result of the popular "Melodies" of Moore, the old Gaelic literature of the Fenian and Ulster cycles was unearthed; in the old legends and traditions a treasure of romance was revealed and its priceless worth evaluated at last.

The reading of Celtic literature continued during the last decade of the nineteenth century into the beginning of the twentieth. The study of Gaelic was forwarded, and its use as a spoken language extended. With vigor and power the Celtic movement aroused great interest, created an atmosphere entirely Irish, and influenced literary geniuses to give birth to an Irish National Drama, the Irish theatre which grew up in Dublin as the outgrowth of the revival of old Irish spirit.

The Irish race is indeed a dramatic one; it is a race of born actors. There are the names of Irish writers of the drama: Goldsmith, Farquhar, Sheridan, and Oscar Wilde, but these dramatists did not write plays typically Irish; their talents in the field of drama were utilized for the glory of England, and as such, they are Anglo-Irish dramatists. Ireland has given England a host of her best actors and dramatists. Going back to the time of Shakespeare to Ludowick Barry, author of the play "Ram Alley", down through the centuries through Macklin Souther, Steele, O'Keefe, Kenny, and so on to the time of Sheridan, Knowles, Oscar Wilde, Dion Boucicault, and Shaw we note how numerous has been the supply of Ireland to English histrionic fields. How can one account for the absence of the truly creative Irish drama? True, Ireland

never possessed a national drama until this modern Celtic movement was effected and the Abbey Theatre founded. Irish literary historians have made it known that there is decidedly an absence of the drama in Ireland. There was no dramatic literature, a remarkable omission, until the National Drama Movement of the twentieth century. Irish culture and civilization had not been negliected - one of the oldest civilizations is Ireland's; Anglo-Irish writers of the drama had brought glories to Ireland, and actors in hosts achieved honor in England and Ireland. There were a few plays written in Ireland; still they lacked the creativeness of a really Irish theatre which distinguished them as being purely Irish in character. It was not until 1901 that there was a play written in Irish.

The absence of the drama in Ireland can partly be accounted for by recalling the sorrows of Ireland; the invasions by the conquest-lovers, the dissension within the Isle, the woes and religious persecutions, the Penal Code, the famine, emigration - in general, the social and political conditions of Ireland were not favorable to the establishment of a national drama. On the other hand, the drama of the continent was treated by the Irish with indifference; they heeded not the influence of Shakespeare upon English literature or upon the literature of France or Germany. They did not appear to listen curiously to the call for drama; they lacked, in the main, interest in it as purely national, though they are known to have received and witnessed plays of Anglo-Irish nature. Strange no impulse for drama was enacted through religion; the Catholic Church was responsible for the miracle and mystery plays, yet in Ireland, a Catholic country, the Church did not aid in the development of the drama as it had in the European countries. The prevalence of the bards and the shanachies who recited poetry and supplied the dramatic through this

rendition, may partly excuse the lack of drama. Whatever dramatic instinct was theirs was supplied through the singing and recitation of the bards and the story-tellers in the home and that spoken word seemed to satisfy their dramatic cravings. As a whole, the Irish did not view the drama with unprejudiced eyes; they are believed to have looked upon the theatre in a disparaging manner; they loathed it and reproved those who gave it sanction, which attitude is certainly a peculiar one, when one considers the Catholic atmosphere of early drama and the encouragement which the Church so willingly gave. Certain it is that there was need for an Irish National Drama and this need was met during the Celtic Literary Movement when attention no longer was focused upon Parnell and political wranglings, but on something of permanence - literature. The revival of Irish past, by using the stories, legends, of Gaelic background was enacted by a school of new poets and was continued and promoted by a new school of dramatists.

"The Wanderings of Oisin" by W. B. Yeats marks the beginning of the Irish revival in 1889. This is a work in poetry renowned for its poetical qualities and based upon a study of the Fenian cycle legends of Celtic literature, especially commendable, principally as a poetic contribution to the Irish Renaissance. Mr. Yeats swayed the movement in the right direction; he stirred other poets and lovers of literature to inquire into the mystery and romance of Deirdre, Cuchulain, and Medb. He, as poet and dramatist, was a leader in developing a distinctive Irish culture, independent of England. With keen perception he viewed Irish customs in a new light, and boldly attempted to rid Irish literature of the conventional types of drama and fiction.

In 1894 "The Land of Heart's Desire", also by Yeats, a one-act

play, set into swing the modern dramatic movement in Ireland. Based upon the "fairy changeling" theme of Irish folk-lore, it was warmly received at the Avenue Theatre, London, and was ample proof that the Irish drama was gripping England and Ireland. The national Irish drama was assuredly to flourish, and flourish it did, with the support of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, as well as George Russell ("A. E.") and Miss Hormiman, an English woman who materially aided the dramatic producers.

With the production of Yeats's "The Countess Cathleen" in 1899 at Dublin, Yeats's desire for an Irish Literary Theatre in Ireland was realized. Plays by Edward Martyn, George Moore and W. B. Yeats produced with English actors followed. Douglas Hyde's "The Twisting of the Rope", the first really Celtic play to be staged in Ireland, was produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, in 1901, and directed by W. G. Fay, the founder of the Irish school for acting. The Fay brothers, William and Frank, asked George Russell ("A. E.") after reading his play "Deirdre" for permission to produce the play of sorrows. Both brothers were intensely interested in the Irish drama: one was a comedian and played in vaudeville, the other had a great fondness for plays and was gifted as a dramatic producer. "The Finding of the Fay Brothers" by Russell and the realization of Yeats's dream in the production of his play "Kathleen ni Houlihan", presented in Saint Teresa's Hall, Clarendon Street, Dublin 1902, mark the beginning of the Irish National Theatre and the formation of the Abbey Players. Two years later - in 1904 - the Abbey Theatre was established through the financial aid of Miss A. E. F. Horninan and the efforts of George Russell, Edward Martyn, Lady Gregory, and W. B. Yeats as well as the work of the Fays in founding the school of acting. Plays for the first time were written for Irish actors, Irish producers, and an Irish public. Yeats, in conceiving the idea of

this movement, by producing "Kathleen ni Houlihan", and allowing it to be acted by the Fay brothers, amateurs, made great appeal to his Irish audience. William and Frank Fay by their excellent acting, staging, and dramatic instruction made possible the Abbey Theatre--now remembers for its actors. The Abbey Theatre today suggests such artists as Sara Allgood, Arthur Sinclair, Maire O'Neill, Maire ni Shuiblaigh, Una O'Connor, and Eithne Magee, and such supporters as Yeats, Russell, and Lady Gregory.

With the establishment of the Abbey Theatre tremendous dramatic creation resulted; playwrights and plays appeared in no time; all Ireland became dramatically enthusiastic; theatres - The Cork Dramatic Society Theatre at Cork, the Ulster Literary Theatre at Belfast, and the Theatre of Ireland at Dublin resulted; Ireland at last had its own national drama.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

William Butler Yeats is the man most representative of the Celtic Literary Revival. Born at Sandymount, near Dublin, June 1865, he spent the early part of his life in Sligo and London. His secondary education was obtained in England, his holidays were spent in Ireland; so both countries at an early age were known to him. His father, John B. Yeats, was a great artist and member of the Royal Hibernian Academy. From him William obtained his inherent love for Nature and things beautiful. He studied painting for a short time, but abandoned art for literature in 1886.

In his youth Yeats read with delight the poetry of Spenser, and the works of Whitman, Ferguson, Allingham, and Davis, the patriotic poet. He read and admired Materlinck and also Ibsen, but at a later period in his life. Yeats experimented with verses and really taught himself to write poetry. From 1889, at the time of

the publication of his first book of poems "The Wanderings of Oisin" to 1899, he devoted all his attention and time of the writing of lyrics, and made many contributions to magazines.

Yeats was leader in the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre in Dublin 1899. With the Celtic Literary Revival he was very much interested and it is doubtful if Irish drama would have achieved such universal fame were it not for his efforts. Yeats studied folk-lore, legends, books of mysticism, Irish mythology and folk-tales, which information he made use of in his plays. Yeats was supremely eager to give Ireland a national literature, and to contribute plays and verses as a worker in this movement. In 1892 he published "Countess Cathleen", his first play in poetic form, Soon followed "The Land of Heart's Desire" shich was his first play to be staged. It is probably for this play that he is most generally known.

His verse contributions to literature include the following volumes: "Wind among the Reeds" 1899; "Responsibilities" 1914; "The Wild Swan at Coole" 1917; "Later Poems" 1922 and "The Tower" 1927. Literary and critical essays of note are: "Ideas of Good and Evil" 1903; "The Cutting of an Agate" 1912; and "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" 1918. His other plays worthy of commendation include "Kathleen ni Houlihan", "The Pot of Broth", "The Hour Glass", "Deirdre", "The King's Threshold", "Plays for Dancere" 1921, and "The Cat and The Moon" 1924. For his literary contributions he was awarded the Nobel prize in 1924.

Yeats became director of the Abbey Theatre in 1904 and contributed assiduously to its support. He made lecture tours in the United States in 1903-1904, and also 1914-1920, advocating the revival of Gaelic literature and the establishment of an Irish literature. The Irish Free State in 1922 named him as one of its senators.

As a lyricist he is supreme, but as a playwright he is best known.

In 1889, Yeats published his "Wanderings of Oisin", as a result of his intense readings and research work in the folk-lore, legends, and romances. He was passionately fond of poetry and had written much while a boy; consequently it is small wonder that as his interest in ancient myths of Ireland increased, he should give expression of these influences in the recounting of the Fenian poet's wanderings. It is a long narrative poem but contains many beautiful lyrics, for it must be remembered that as a lyricist, Yeats is supreme. "In exuberance, and richness of color it is Mr. Yeats's most typically Irish poem based on legend, and nowhere do his lines go with more lilt, or fall oftener into inevitability of phrase, or more fully diffuse a glamour of other world lines. 'The Wanderings of Oisin' revealed poetry as unmistakably new to his day as was Poe's to the earliest Victorian days. Beside the title poem another from legend had this new quality, 'The Madness of King Gall', with its refrain that will not out of memory: 'They will not hush, the leaves a-flutter round me, the beech leaves old.' 'Down by the Salley Gardens' and 'The Meditation of the Old Fisherman' bear witness to talks before turf fires, or in herring boats off Knocknarea, and other developments of folk-song or tale have the place-names of his home country of Sligo; but this distinctive quality is theirs in less measure, and few others in the little volume have it at all". *

W. B. Yeats's first play to be staged in Ireland was "The Countess Cathleen". It was published in 1892, but was not produced until 1899, when, with Martyn's "The Heather Field", it was presented by the Irish Literary Theatre and marked the inauguration

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* Irish Plays and Playwrights - Cornelius Weygandt. Chapter III.

of the Celtic Renaissance in drama. It is a drama with a simple plot. The background to be sure is Irish, yet the story of the play is in reality only that of a folktale and might fittingly take place in any country; in this respect, it resembles Kipling's "The Sacrifice of Er-Heb".

The plot of "The Countess Cathleen" is this: two demons in a time of famine attempt to secure the soul of a truly spiritual woman, Countess Cathleen. In the guise of human beings the demons wander over Ireland selling food for the starving people in exchange for souls. Countess Cathleen offers her wealth to them as a security, but she finds that her money has been stolen by these crafty demons who have designs upon her soul. Tempted by them, she agrees to sell her own soul, provided the starving people of her land may be relieved. Countess Cathleen dies from grief when she realizes what great sacrifices she has made, but she is borne to Heaven because of her spirit of self - kindness and human kindness. Her beautiful dying words are:

> Bend down your faces, Oona an Aleel:
> I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
> Upon the nest under the cave, before
> He wander the loud waters ....

These last few lines are hauntingly beautiful and the listener takes home with him memories of beauty and exquisite charm.

Dublin was shocked with the production; the behavior of the first audience was uproarious. The play was attacked as being anti-Catholic; - religiously unorthodox. The specific accusation made against the play was that it showed that the people of Ireland could consent to sell their souls and that the soul of the countess was proved by the play to be more valuable than the sould of starving people whom she was befriending.

Edward Martyn was connected with the Irish National Theatre and was sponsoring the production of his own play "The Heather Field"

on May 8, 1899 in conjunction with Yeats's "Countess Cathleen". He was a devout Catholic and became disturbed at the opposition and protests. He would not knowingly sanction any play of anti-Catholic suggestiveness. To console him, the play was submitted to Rev. Dr. William Barry, a Catholic literary authority, who refused to condemn it as heretical, and brought about a settlement. But the first performance of "Countess Cathleen" was an exciting one. Police protection was demanded for the safety of the actors; there was much hissing and booing in the balcony. For a play so exquisitely beautiful and poetic, this was a strange beginning.

From a literary standpoint the play was considered excellent; critics were generous in their praise, and showed great appreciation for this great lyrical play; it made a permanent impression upon the minds of those who attended the performance. But today "Countess Cathleen" is rarely produced, despite the fact that Yeats never produced anything of greater literary excellence. The lack of popularity of it as a produced play is that it appeals to "only a few".

"The Land of Heart's Desire" is a notable one-act play in blank verse. It is "a thing of beauty" and such "is a joy forever"; Yeats has never produced a greater lyric poem. It is a folk play, the story of which Yeats took from the fairy treasure of Ireland, yet there is noticeable element of symbolism in it which makes even the reading of the play a memorable one, not only for its beauty, but also for its symbolic qualities. The language of "The Land of Heart's Desire" is exceptionally beautiful; it belongs with "The Countess Cathleen", for its poetic value is fully as excellent. Like "The Countess Cathleen", it abounds with musical language; there are lilt and song in many of the verses, and the Fairy's Song

is as lasting in one's memory as the last haunting lines of "Countess Cathleen".

The Fairy's Song follows:

"The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away;
While the fairies dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair;
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say --
'When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,
The lonely of heart is withered away'."

The scene of the play is laid in the Barony of Kilmacowen, in the County of Sligo. Mary Bruin, newly-married bride of Shawn Bruin, is brought home to the Bruins. Instead of interesting herself in culinary work and household duties, Mary, a dreamy girl, reads from the "old book",

"How a Princess Edane,
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
And followed, half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the Land of Faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
And she is still there, busied with a dance,
Deep in the dewy shadows of a wood,

Or where stars walk upon a mountain top."

Mary is captivated by the story of the Princess, believes in the fairies about whom she reads, and cries to them to take her. A spell is cast over her; by the singing of a child, Mary Bruin's soul is lured away to "The Land of Heart's Desire", in the midst of the helpless and spellbound onlookers. No assistance can be given the bride, for the child had persuaded Father Hart to remove the crucifix from the wall.

"The Land of Heart's Desire" was first produced at the Avenue Theatre, London, March 29, 1894. It was the first of Mr. Yeats's plays to be staged and also the first to be played in America, yet it was not produced in the Abbey Theatre until 1911, though of all his plays, it has been most often staged. Its basis is upon fairy-lore, and strange is it that no other fairy play appealing to adults, with the exception of "The Golden Apple" by Lady Gregory, has been written since "The Land of Heart's Desire".

"Kathleen ni Houlihan" is a dream play in prose, the theme of which is patriotism. It has strongly appealed to Irish audiences for its nationalism, and has been played in Ireland more frequently than any other play. The working people have greatly enjoyed it, for in spite of being a one-act play of fantasy, it is beautiful in speech of the country people. "Its effect upon the stage is very different from its effect in study. Read, it seems allegory too obvious to impress. The old women, Cathleen ni Houlihan, with 'too many strangers in the house' and with her 'four beautiful fields' taken from her is so patently Ireland, possessed by England, all four provinces, that one fails to feel the deep humanity of the sacrifies of Michael Gillane for her, his country, even though that sacrifice be one his wedding eve. Seen and listened to,

'Kathleen ni Houlihan' brings tears to the eyes and chokes the throat with sobs, so intimately physical is the appeal of its pathos. He is, indeed, dull of understanding or hard of heart who can witness a performance of this play and not feel that something noble has come his way. It seizes hold of the Irishmen of the patriotic societies as does 'The Wearing of the Green', and even the outlander, little sympathetic to the cause of Ireland and holding patriotism a provincial thing, is moved in some strange way he does not understand. Performance brings out its homliness, its touches of humor, its wistfulness, its nobility. It is with this thought of 'Cathleen ni Houlihan' ends, that is every thought of it on the stage. Off the stage it is, except to him to whom the cause is all, something that falls short of nobility, to many little more than eloquent allegory". *

This play is a very effective one-act play dramatically. Doubtless it is not surpassed by any other one-act play in Irish drama for dramatic effectiveness. It was first staged under the auspices of the Daughters of Ireland, a political organization of prominence. The part of Kathleen was played by Maud Gonne, a political progpagandist and leader in Irish politics. Yeats was delighted with Miss Gonne's treatment and interpretation of her part and paid her a great tribute. 'It was a fine thing,' says Mr. Yeats, for so beautiful a woman to consent to play my poor old Cathleen, and she played with nobility and tragic power---- The most beautiful woman of her time, when she played my Cathleen, made up centuries ole, and never should the part be played but with a like sincerity'. **

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* Irish Plays and Playwrights - Cornelius Weygandt.

** The Irish Drama - Andrew F. Malone.

The story of "Kathleen ni Houlihan" is laid in Killala, and concerns the strange attitute of a haggard old woman who, on the evening of the French landing in 1897, enters the cottage of Michael Gillane, in a woebegone condition. In reply to Michael's questioning Kathleen says that strangers have robbed her of "four beautiful fields". Michael, though about to be married to Delia Cahel, offers to serve Kathleen and help her recover her home. She believes the service is too hard a one for Michael and, leaving the cottage, sings:

"They shall be remembered forever,
They shall be alive forever,
They shall be speaking forever,
The people shall hear them forever."

Michael learns from his brother that the French have landed, and is told by Patrick, upon inquiry as to whether or not his brother had seen an old woman leaving the cottage: "I did not, but I saw a young girl and she had the walk of a queen."

From a dramatic standpoint, in style, dramatic effectiveness, and technique, "The Hour Glass" surpasses all of Mr. Yeats's plays. It is a morality play taken from the folk-tale and contains much symbolism; it is like "Everyman" in many ways and shows influence of this moral play. As in "Everyman", the Father of Heaven sends Death to summon every creature to come and give an account of his life in this world, so in "The Hour Glass" there is a somewhat similar theme. In it the will of God is found to be right, destined, and convincing. In matters of faith those summoned have doubted, but doubted with no proof or assurance of their right in disbelieving in the Invisible World.

The Wise Man symbolizing Reason finally becomes submissive

and is resigned to the will of God -- "Our speculation but as the wind".

"The Pot of Broth" is a one-act farce comedy showing the influence of Lady Gregory's art upon Yeats. It is a play especially popular with the Abbey Theatre and most effective on the stage. The Fays played it in America with "The Rising of the Moon" after they left the Abbey Players - but achieved no success with it, as it was not billed with a group of Irish plays.

The plot of "The Pot of Broth" is fairly amusing. By trickery a tramp inveigles a housewife to give him a meal. He pretends that the stone he possesses can make broth by magic; he carries his pretension further, but in reality, the broth being made from the chicken of the housewife whom he has fooled. On the whole, the importance of the play lies in its farcical element, only, for it is not truly Mr. Yeats; the influence of Lady Gregory is keenly shown; it marks the beginning of several comedies which she and Yeats collaborated in writing.

Perhaps "The King's Threshold" was purposely written by Yeats in defense. He had been accused of caring more for his poetry and art than for his country. In 1911 when he revised the play somewhat, he attached to it an appendage admitting his real purpose in the writing of "The King's Threshold". The play, he says, "was written when our Society was beginning its fight for the recognition of pure art in a community of which one is half buried in the practical affairs of life, and the other half in politics and a propagandist patriotism." * King Guaire had commanded the the poet Seanchan should be seated at a table lower than his coun-

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* The Irish Drama - Andrew F. Malone. Page 138.

sellors:

Three days ago
I yielded to the outcry of my courtiers--
Bishops, Soldiers, and Makers of the Law--
Who long had thought it against their dignity
For a mere man or words to sit amongst them.

Seanchan, the poet, had refused to take the lower seat assigned to him and had gone to lie upon 'The King's Threshold', refusing to touch food of any kind,

"-----for there is a custom,
An old and foolish custom, that if a man
Be wronged, or think that he is wronged, and starve
Upon another's threshold till he die,
The common people, for all time to come,
Will raise a heavy cry against that threshold
Even though it be the King's".

The King sends food to Seanchan, and finally comes with food himself. But he will not admit the claim of the poet to equality, and the pupils of Seanchan are led upon the stage with halters about their necks. So Seanchan dies in protest, and as they carry the litter from the stage, the Youngest Pupil says:

"O silver trumpets be you lifted up
And cry to the great race that is to come.
Long-throated swans upon the waves of time,
Sing loudly for beyond the wall of the world
The race may hear our music and awake".

"The King's Threshold" is today rarely presented. Written and played in 1903 it was a challenge to politicians and political propagandists of the loyalty of Yeats to Ireland. Yeats

showed his staunch patriotism in the play; he claimed poetry to be essential to the survival of a nation; in his case, - Ireland, and as a poet, he was a patriot stirring patriotic feelings for his country, and therefore, an important being in society. Thus "The King's Threshold" may well be called a play of purpose.

Yeats, like Synge and George Russell ("A. E."), obtained his plot for "Deirdre" from the old romance of the Ulster cycle in Celtic literature, Aided Chloinne Uisnig, Death of the Sons of Usnech, -- the story of Deirdre. Yeats shows himself a supreme master of this tragic story and a great delineator of character. In no other play does he exhibit such skill at character portrayal; in no other drama does he prove himself capable of such heights in tragic effectiveness. A portion of the success of "Deirdre" is due to the Celtic story tellers and to the tale itself, but in the main, it is the craftmanship of Yeats which is responsible for the indubitable success of this tragedy. No other user of this theme (and there have been frequent writings and various versions of "Deirdre"), has so successfully employed this story, unless it is perhaps Synge, to whom reference will be made later.

Yeats used only the last act of the tragedy "Deirdre" and has centered all his dramatic ability on a one-act play of real intensive drama, the greatest drama he has achieved, for it cannot be forgotten that Yeats was supremely a poet-dramatist.

Naisi and Deirdre arrive at the palace of King Conchubar. Fergus has promised that Conchubar will receive Naisi and Deirdre cordially; however, the lovers have great doubts and suspect the king of seeking revenge. The treachery of the king is revealed, and his intentions are made clear. Naisi is doomed; nothing except his renunciation of Deirdre can prevent his death. Deirdre

shows herself most willing to yield to the plan in order to save Naisi, but Naisi forbids her sacrifice and is murdered. Deirdre feigns love for the kind in order to win permission to gaze at her dead lover. Winning the aged king's consent, she kills herself and joins her beloved Naisi in death.

In November 1906, "Deirdre" was successfully staged in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. It met with immediate approval, for the story was so nobly related, and the sorrowful character of "Deirdre" so sharply and hauntingly depicted that Yeats, not primarily a dramatist, was declared to be - contrary to his custom - a creator of character, and the audience saw in him what heretofore had been lacking. Previously, he had always so demonstrated in his literary endeavors a "quest for beauty" through the medium of poetry; now he revealed himself to have successfully attempted creating character, and "Deirdre" was conclusive proof of his dramatic powers at character portrayal. He made every line, every speech, every incident, every setting of his "Deirdre" beautiful and yet dramatically effective; the whole play to the listener is memorable, though the lines may not be carried in the memory as easily as those in "Countess Cathleen" or "The Land of Heart's Desire". But there are passages worthy of attention and thought, lines which are truly dramatic and tragic, lines which haunt because of their greatness. One such passage in "the crying of a woman's heart in Deirdre's offer to go with Conchubar that Naisi may be save":

"It's better to go with him.
Why should you die when one can bear it all?
My life is over; it's better to obey.
Why should you die? I will not live long, Naisi.
I'd not have you believe I'd long stay living;

Oh, no, no, no! You will go far away.
You will forget me. Speak, speak, Naisi, speak,
And say that it is better that I go.
I will not ask it. Do not speak a word,
For I will take it all upon myself,
Conchubar, I will go".

Such is the pathetic gripping cry of a woman's heart full of tragedy and drama.

The songs in "Deirdre" are mournful in tone and should be uttered by a possessor of a fine speaking voice rather than by a gifted singer. They are like dirges and for that reason should be chanted more with the passion of fear and sorrow expressed in them than sung. The voices of Sara Allgood and Florence Farr, actresses of Yeats's play, blended beautifully in musical speech with the solemn passionate fine speaking of the songs, Mr. Yeats thought.

"There has never been a poet who used better the gifts his country gave him than Mr. Yeats. The heroic legends of Ireland are in his poetry, Irish folk-lore is there, and the book of the country; and a man moulded as only Irish conditions, of old times and of today, could mould him, Irish conditions spiritual, intellectual, and physical; a man with eyes on a bare countryside in the gray of twilight, thinking of the stories the peasants tell and of the legends whose setting this is before him. At this hour, with such surroundings, and in such thought, the Other World is as near to all men as their natures will let it come, and to Mr. Yeats it is very near. Waking dreams come to him at such hours, and he puts them into his verse, waking dreams of his country's legendary past and of its fairy present, and waking dreams born of books of old magic he has read indoors". *

* Irish Plays and Playwrights - Cornelius Weygandt. Chap. III p. 37.

Yeats is the most poetic of the Irish dramatists; he loves lyric poetry; ever and ever his poetic plays are pointed out as the best examples of the art of verse drama in English. They are abundant with beautiful ideas and beautiful words. His belief that poetry is his "divine enthusiasm" needs no explanation; revelation of that credo is evidenced in the reading of his plays, for one cannot miss his striking decorative words of lyrical sense. Without a doubt Yeats is the greatest lyrical poet of the generation. He is the first since Swinburne to strike "the most distinctly new note" in poetry.

As a contributor to Irish drama it must be remembered that Yeats's primary interest was not in the drama. He was absorbed in the Irish Literary Revival and the modern dramatic movement in Ireland. He believed, however, that he would express himself best as a poet and not as a prose dramatist. Until the age of thirty-four Yeats contributed to the literature of Ireland in English lyrical verse; the last part of his life he devoted to drama, forsaking lyrical poetry for dramatic poetry, but he always strove to make dramatic speech high in poetic qualities. The art of poetry was with him supreme, whether he be writing pure poetry or not, and through it he evoked emotions which are symbolic. His artistry afforded him opportunities for mysticism, and with the influence of his study of Gaelic literature and Celtic mythology, it is not surprising that mysticism and symbolism are elements in his poetry. Interest in the magic was an obsession with Yeats.

Yeats is a severe critic of his poetry. He believes in "verbal mastery" and has written, rewritten, and revised many of his plays. "The Countess of Cathleen", "The Land of Heart's Desire", and "Deirdre" are plays which he has rewritten, each time

making them more dramatic. The tragic acting of Mrs. Patrick Campbell led Yeats to rewrite "Deirdre" for her.

"Without Mr. Yeats as moving power, Syng had not been; without Mr. Yeats to interest her in the movement, Lady Gregory had not written her farces and folk-histories; and without the Abbey Theatre's plays as standard, the younger playwrights of Cork and Belfast would have written plays very other than those they have written." * Mr. Yeats is a dramatist, but it can not be said he is a great one; his influence upon other dramatists, and actors, as well as men assiduously interest in the movement has been remarkable; likewise his contributions to Irish literature. Though not esteemed an outstandingly great dramatist, he is a master of deliberately beautiful verse, a poet in the theatre.

The following are remarks made by well-known critics regarding Mr. Yeats's works - and his efforts in behalf of Irish nationalism through the medium of literature:-

Mr. Richard Ashe King in the Bookman, London, September 1897, writes:

"Modern Ireland has produced nothing so exquisitely Celtic, intense and lovely as Mr. Yeats's poetry, or so inherently Irish. It has no need to protest itself Irish by an obtrusive patriotism, by the wearing of the green upon its sleeve, since its very soul is Irish. It is not a spray of plucked shamrock, but the shamrock itself live and dewy, growing naturally (without, so to say, the self consciousness of being an emblem) on its native sod. Mr. Yeats has brooded upon Ireland, upon her legends, her songs, her peasantry, her scenery, till like the brooding sibyl, he inspired and the soul of his country sighs through his verse-------

"I have dwelt upon these notes in Mr. Yeats's work not merely

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* Irish Plays and Playwrights - Cornelius Weygandt. Chapt. III.

because they are distinctively Irish, but also because they are distinctive notes of pure poetry. It is to his advantage and to ours that he does not belong to a school which holds 'poetry to be a criticism of life', nor to a sect which demands that he should be a teacher of morals, nor to a race which is subject to the iron despotism of fact.....It is, again, to Mr. Yeats's advantage -- and to ours -- that while he has derived his inspiration in lonely places, among a primitive peasantry, and from legends which, though still green, have their roots deep down in a haunted past and in the hearts of visionary race".

Of Mr. Yeats as poet is is hardly necessary to write at length. The English critic Mr. William Sharp ("Lyra Celtica" xiiv: 1896) has written of his poetry:

"If it be advisable to select one poet, still 'with a future' as preeminently representative of the Celtic genius of today, I think there can be little doubt that W. B. Yeats's name is that which would occur first to most lovers of contemporary poetry. He has the grace of touch and distinction of form beyond any of the younger poets of Great Britain, and there is throughout his work a haunting beauty and a haunting sense of beauty, everywhere perceived with joy and longing, that make its appeal irresistible for those who feel it at all. He is equally happy whether he deals with antique or with contemporary themes, and in almost every poem he has written there is that exquisite remoteness, that dream-like music, and that transporting charm which Matthew Arnold held to be one of the primary tests of poetry, and, in particular of Celtic poetry."

Musical critic of the "Manchester Guardian" (May 19, 1903)

writes:

"If we are ever to find a way back to a true harmony between music and poetry it will almost certainly be by some such way as Mr. Yeats's--that is to say, by consulting the poet, who has hitherto not been allowed to exercise the slightest influence over the musician, except in the very rare cases where poet and musician have been identical, as with Wagner and Cornelius. Such cases are too exceptional to be of much interest for Mr. Yeats, who desires to alter the entire attitude of the public toward poetry, and make them regard it as essentially something to be heard rather than something to be read in silence. For such a purpose nothing depending on the extremely elaborate and difficult technique of modern music will serve, and it is, therefore, possible that Mr. Yeats may be on the track of an important discovery".

From "The Quarterly Review", April 1902:

"The Land of Heart's Desire" puts into a dramatic idyll of rare beauty the story so common in Irish folk-lore, of a bride stolen by fairies". "In Countess Cathleen the powers of human goodness, working under the will of God, are ranged against the greater and lesser spirits of evil".

Mr. Clement Shorter in "The Sphere" June 6, 1903, says of Mr. Yeats's "Ideas of Good and Evil": "Mr. Yeats has a mastery of our tongue that is second to no English writer of today, that here is a command of a singularly beautiful prose style, and behind the prose style an abundance of good ideas".

LADY GREGORY

Anonymous in Chicago "Daily Tribune" February 1912:

To Lady Gregory

Long be it e'er to its last anchorage
Thy oaken keel, O "Fighting Temeraire,"
Shall forth beyond the busy harbour fare.
Still mayest thou the battle royal wage
To show a people to itself; to gauge
The depth and quality peculiar there;
Of its humanity to catch the air
And croon its plaintiveness upon the stage.

Nay, great and simple seer of Erin's seers,
How we rejoice that thou wouldst not remain
Beside thy hearth, bemoaning useless years,
But hear'st with inner ear the rhythmic strain
Of Ireland's mystic overburdened heart
Nor didst refuse to play thy noble part!

Isabelle Augusta Gregory was born at Roxborough, County Galway, Ireland 1859 of the distinguished Persse family of England and Ireland. She was the youngest daughter of Dudley Persse. Later, as Lady Gregory, she became an outstanding figure in the literary revival of Ireland by reawakening interest in the folklore of Ireland. She was especially interested in the folk-lore of western Island in the neighborhood of Kiltartan, in Galway, and wrote many plays in the dialect of that vicinity.

In 1881 this authoress married Sir William Gregory, a former member of Parliament representing County Galway and

Dublin, and Governor of Ceylon. Her husband died in 1892 and then Lady Gregory devoted her time to a literary career. She became friendly with Yeats and through his influence particularly, became a staunch supporter in the Irish Literary Revival. In connection with the founding of the Abbey Theatre which Yeats, Martyn, and George Moore sponsored, Lady Gregory showed great enthusiasm and became one of its founders. Her "Our Irish Theatre" (1913) gives a detailed account of the founding of the Abbey Theatre and its struggle for existence. Until recently Lady Gregory has been manager of the Abbey Theatre and has brought much fame to it. Of her plays written for the Abbey Theatre and staged by the great Abbey Players "Spreading the News", "Grania", "Hyacinth Halvey", "The Jackdaw", "The Rising of the Moon", "The Work-house Ward", "MacDonough's Wife", and "The Story Brought Home by Brigit" are the most widely known.

Lady Gregory has also translated many of Moliere's plays into the Anglo-Irish dialect of English for the Abbey Theatre. Her efforts in Irish Literature have been exceedingly great; she is a credit to Ireland and to Irish Literature. Her affiliations with Yeats and their concern with the establishment of an Irish theatre are of greatest importance.

Lady Gregory was interesting in the writing of Irish drama. She enjoyed especially the verse plays of Yeats, and felt sorry that there existed no Irish theatre where the play might be presented. A chance meeting with Yeats informed Lady Gregory that he had always entertained the thought of an Irish theatre. It happened that through this common interest Yeats and Lady Gregory found time to talk over the possibilities of an Irish theatre where plays by Irish dramatists eager "to adjust the theatre to the

demands of society in both cities and the provinces" * and "to readjust the internal structure of the theatre as a producing mechanism to the better purpose of art" * could be produced. The principal drawback in carrying out their dream of an Irish theatre was lack of finances. Lady Gregory guaranteed £25 and proposed that subscription be solicited. With the necessary funds available, it was hoped to make possible the presentation of Edward Martyn's "Heather Field" and Yeats's "The Countess Cathleen".

A formal letter was written by Mr. Yeats and Lady Gregory and sent to men and women who the sponsors of the movement believed might assist financially. The letter follows:

"We propose to have performed in Dublin, in the spring of every year Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England, and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political question that divide us".

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* Our Irish Theatre - Lady Gregory

Aubrey de Vere, the poet, approved of the undertaking, as did Professor Mahaffy of Trinity College. Others supporting the plan were Edward Martyn, Jane Barlow, Emily Lawless, Dr. Douglas Hyde, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Lord and Lady Ardilaun, the Duchess of St. Albans, John Redmond, Rt. Hon. Horace Plunkett, John Dillon, M. P. and William O'Brien.

Then came difficulty in obtaining a theatre. The Dublin theatres were all engaged for some time ahead, and in considering a concert or lecture hall, a license had to be secured. Provision was finally made for the rental of the Ancient Concert Rooms in Dublin, for the first performance under this enterprise, May 8, 1899. This was about a year from the time of the chance discussion of the idea of an Irish theatre by Yeats, Lady Gregory and Martyn. As had been planned, "Heather Field" and "The Countess Cathleen" were presented. That first performance was a memorable one; allusion has already been made to the disgraceful conduct of the audience and the "rough reception" which it gave the English players of Martyn's and Yeats's plays. "The Countess Cathleen" was hissed and hissed; it was attacked as being anti-Catholic and anti-Irish. Such was not found to be the case, however, and gradually the play, upon continued performances, came to receive the hearty support of many who had formerly hissed it.

The following year - 1900, an English company of actors again appeared in Dublin at the Gaiety Theatre and played "The Last Feast of the Fianna" by Alice Milligan, "Maeve", by Edward Martyn, and "The Bending of the Bought" by George Moore. "The Bending of the Bough" caused much excitement inasmuch as it was the first Irish play to deal vitally with political affairs of Ireland. "Maeve" proved most captivating and greatly interested the audi-

ence--This play was Edward Martyn's great and only theatrical success. It gripped the audience, and, as he said, "symbolized Ireland's choice between English materialism and her own natural idealism, as well as the choice of every individual soul".

In 1901 were produced "Diarmuid and Grania" by George Moore and W. B. Yeats, and "Casad-an-Sugan" ("The Twisting of the Rope") by Dr. Douglas Hyde, the founder of the Gaelic League, and the great advocate of a revival of the Irish language. "The Twisting of the Rope" was the first play written in Irish to be staged in the city of Dublin. It was heartily received, for, as a folk-play, it was delightfully Irish.

The meeting of the Fay brothers by George Russell ("A. E.") and Mr. Yeats was responsible for the next step in promoting the Irish National Theatre. They were prime spirits in establishing a school for acting in Ireland, and their interest in the movement and Yeats's confidence in them led to their production of "Kathleen ni Houlihan" by Yeats and "Deirdre" by "A. E." on the evening of April 2, 1902 in St. Theresa's Hall, Dublin. Mr. Fay's school of acting was thus begun; the Irish National Dramatic Society under the presidency of Yeats and "A. E." was becoming very influential. In 1903, the Irish National Theatre Society journeyed to London for the first time and played successfully Yeats's "Hour Glass", "Kathleen ni Houlihan", and "The Pot of Broth", Ryan's "Laying the Foundations" and Lady Gregory's "Twenty-Five". Great encouragement was given the players during their succeeding visits to London. They attracted the attention of Miss A. E. F. Horniman who provided funds for the setting up and rebuilding of the Old Mechanics Institute in Abbey Street, Dublin. Miss Horniman gave financial assistance for a number of years and made the Abbey

Theatre possible. On December 24, 1904 the Irish National Theatre Society staged Yeats's "On Baile's Strand" and Lady Gregory's "Spreading of the News" at the Abbey Theatre. Yeats's dream was realized. To Lady Gregory, Miss Horniman, Edward Martyn, George Moore, George Russell ("A. E.") and the Fay brothers, who unfortunately left the company before its success was assured, great praise should be given.

Besides her untiring efforts in behalf of the Abbey Theatre, Lady Gregory has contributed many excellent plays of Irish life. She lived in Galway among the peasantry most of her life and made a great study of the peasant folk. She loved their folk tales and folk-songs, and she gradually became absorbed in every activity of the peasants. She studied folk-lore, became obsessed with the Irish life of her section, Connacht, and made this her life interest. She talked to the peasants in their Irish tongue, listened to them sing their lovely songs, and gave an eager ear to their old stories and legends. In the Irish Theatre movement it is not surprising the Lady Gregory was concerned with the folk-drama, that she wrote peasant plays, collected and translated folk-tales and brought the theatre to the peasant.

In all Lady Gregory's comedies she used what many critics have objected to, "Kiltartan English" - the English of the people of her home country on the borders of Clare and Galway, the English made by a people who think it is Irish. This gives to her plays a foreign quality and makes one aware that he is in a foreign atmosphere. In reading or witnessing these plays it is singularly interesting to feel oneself transported so unconsciously to Ireland through the medium of Lady Gregory's so-called "Kiltartan English".

"Spreading the News" - produced in December 1904, has rumor

as its motive. Lady Gregory has written an entertaining force based upon the deafness of Mrs. Tarpey in which she has vivified the character of Bartly Fallon so that he is a true farcical character, an object of pity and laughter. The whole play is the humor of situation. Had not the mentioning of an errand been turned into interesting gossip by misunderstanding, there would be no humor in the event. From a serious errand Mrs. Tarpey changed the incident into one of murder with a hay fork. Bartley Fallon is ridiculed, laughed at by the audience one moment, but soon through pity for his imbecility is receiving sympathy.

The dialogue of "Spreading the News" like all of Lady Gregory's plays is real, racy with Irish idioms, and full of speeches characteristic of Irish peasantry. A moral - that of avoiding the spread of scandal - is derived from this play. The incident which called to mind the basis of the play is told by Lady Gregory. "The idea of this play first came to me as a tragedy. I kept seeing as in a picture people sitting by the roadside, and a girl passing to the market, gay and fearless. And then I saw her passing by the same place at evening, her head hanging, the heads of others turned from her, because of some sudden story that had risen out of a chance word, and had snatched away her good name.

"But comedy and not tragedy was wanted at our theatre to put beside the high poetic work 'The King's Threshold', 'The Shadowy Waters', 'On Baile's Strand', 'The Well of the Saints'; And I let laughter have its way with the little play. I was delayed in beginning it for a while, because I could only think of Bartley Fallon as dull-witted or silly or ignorant, and the handcuffs seemed too harsh a punishment. But one day by the sea at Duras a melancholy man who was telling me of the crosses he had gone through at home said, 'But I'm thinking if I went to America, it's long ago today

I'd be dead. And its a great expense for a poor man to be buried in America. Bartley was born at that moment, and far from harsh man I felt I was providing him with a happy old age in giving him the lasting glory of the great and crowning day of misfortune". * So Lady Gregory made Bartley Fallon run after Jack Smith with a hay fork and this entertaining comedy results.

"Hyacinth Halvey" is another farce which was enthusiastically received by Irish audiences. The occasion for this play was the following: "I was pointed out one evening a well huched, well dressed man in the stalls, and was told gossip about him, perhaps not all true, which made me wonder if that appearance and behavior as of extreme respectability might not now and again be felt a burden. After a while he translated himself in my mind into Hyacinth; and as one must set one's original a little way off to get a translation, rather than a tracing, he found himself in Cloon where, as in other parts of our country character is built up or destroyed by a password or an emotion, rather than by experience or deliberation. The idea was more of a universal one than I knew at first, and I have had but uneasy appreciation from some apparently blameless friends. **

"Hyacinth Halvey", having a good reputation thrust upon him, can do whatever he wishes; nothing will take away his good name. He tries "to undeceive the people as to his character"; a series of incidents demonstrates the utter futility of the attempt! So when he actually steals a sheep from the butcher, he is not believed to be the thief; when he steals from the church a half-crown and confesses his guilt, no one will believe him. He is thought to be a virtuous man; and the people of Cloon carry him in honor to the town hall, and beg him to speak on the subject of character

* Our Irish Theatre -- Lady Gregory ** Notes of Seven Short Plays - Lady Gregory.

building: "Three cheers for Hyacinth Halvey! Hip! Hip! Hoorah!"

"Workhouse Ward", first produced April 20, 1908, rather satirizes the fondness of people to quarrel over nothing. Lady Gregory tells that quarreling is more pleasant to the poverty stricken men in the workhouse, than being lonely. It is a source of laughter. The old paupers bemoan the fact that they cannot attend Mass like the others in the poorhouse. When the sister of one offers a home to her brother, the other is disturbed at losing his enemy and begs that Honor take both. This request is not granted; both old cronies will stay there in the workhouse out of fondness for each other, though they do nothing but quarrel. "The Workhouse" is a delightful comedy, one of the funniest of her plays.

"The Rising of the Moon", staged in 1907, has political interest. A police officer permits his political prisoner to escape because the prisoner claims that patriotism is of greater importance than the police sergeant's duty to Britain. Lady Gregory aroused greatly the spirit of patriotism in this play and was even accused of being disloyal to England. Her intent in writing this one-act play was to present the theme that all who appear to be against the politics of Ireland and her freedom, may, in reality, be very sympathetic. The sergeant proved himself to be of this sort.

During the theatrical visit of the Fays in New York they acted in "A Pot of Broth" and "The Rising of the Moon". The plays were not very favorably received in America at that time, as they were not staged wholly as Irish plays on an entirely Irish bill. "The Rising of the Moon" has been much praised for its simple style, its dramatic effectiveness, and its patriotic appeal. Its quiet humor is also well appreciated.

"The Jackdaw", a farce, like "Spreading the News" has rumor

for its motive. The greatness of this play, however, lies not in the theme but in the characterization of Michael Cooney; still Michael Cooney, of the "seventh generation of Cooneys who trusted nobody living or dead" is less vividly drawn than Hyacinth Halvey. In this play, when a widow is greatly in debt, her brother comes to her aid, but conceals his financial aid by claiming that the money has been sent to her in payment for her pet jackdaw. The amusing part of the play is the breaking up of court and the whole town's hunting jackdaws.

"McDonough's Wife" is a later play of Lady Gregory's in which the emotions of a central character are "based upon a single situation". McDonough, the piper returns home only to learn of the death of his wife. He storms over the hags that have cared for his darling Catherine, and blames them for allowing death to take her. To his complaints one of them replies: There is no one at all can put away from his road the bones and the thinness of death". McDonough is disturbed at the thought that people can still patronize the fair while his wife must be buried from the poorhouse, as he has spent all his money at the inns. He happily contrives a plan, that of playing upon his pipe and having the crowds at the fair give her a decent burial. The crowds appear and McDonough speaks to the corpse as the coffin is lifted. "If you got no great honor from your birth up, and went barefoot through the first of your youth, you will get great respect now and be remembered in the times to come. There is many a lady dragging silk skirts through the lawns and the flower knots of Connacht will get no such gathering of people at the last as you are getting on this day". The play admirably combines the pathetic with the tragic.

In "The Bogie Men", Lady Gregory makes another farce from situation. The bogie men are cousins, chimney sweeps. They have been sent from home because of their failure to "attain the virtue of the other". Each finds to his content that the mothers are the originators of the idea that one should emulate the accomplishments of the other. This is less significant in plot than "Spreading the News" which satirizes so well the spread of gossip.

"The Story Brought by Brigit" was presented in 1924. This play is Lady Gregory's proof that she has no fear about dealing with religious themes. She has made this play very delightful to read; however, it was not very successful as a stage production. It lacked dramatic effectiveness and seemed tedious with such frequent "caoning". Lady Gregory has used for the theme of this play the Passion of Our Lord according to an old West Irish tale which narrates Saint Brigit's being present at Calvary.

Besides farces, Lady Gregory has written a few plays dealing with the folk-history of Ireland and has collected them in the Volume of Folk-History Plays - 1912. Of these plays "Kincora" and "Dervorgilla" are great in tragic power, but "Grania" is Lady Gregory's masterpiece in tragedy. It is a dignified and beautiful play having great appeal. The story of Grania, not unlike Deirdre which so many poets and playwrights of this period used, is a sad one, and has its origin in an old Irish legend. Grania is brought to Finn's court to marry him, an old Irish king. She prefers the young Diarmuid, a warrior, and so elopes before the wedding ceremony with him. For seven years Grania and Diarmuid wander about, Diarmuid refuses to become Grania's lover, but remains faithful to Finn, his ruler. Garbed as a beggar, Finn follows and overtakes them. Diarmuid, whom Finn has misjudged, proves his faithfulness

to Finn by darting off to battle; he dies from wounds received in the war. Grania, now, entices Finn and gives him her affection. "There is many a woman lost her lord and took another, and won great priase in the latter end, and great honor", Grania tells Finn. "And why should I be always a widow that went so long a maid? Give me now the crown, till I go out before them, as you offered it offered enough." Finn yields to Grania's wish. "Grania" is a very refreshing play. With a plot of jealousy and treachery, Lady Gregory has introduced only three characters, and has executed her skill to its greatest degree by her clever workmanship.

In the preface of "Grania", Lady Gregory tells of her turning to the legend for her theme--"because so many have written about sad lovely Deirdre, who, when overtaken by sorrow, made no good battle at the last. Grania had more power of will, and for good or evil twice took the shaping of her life in her own hands".

Lady Gregory's forte is the farce. Her noblest and best attainments have been with that form of drama in which the plot controls the characters. Her plays have been widely distributed and staged because of their farcical appeal. All who love gayety and laughter are attracted by them. Though the basic idea of Lady Gregory's plays is slight, she has combined dialogue, characterization, and plot so ingeniously that one must recognize her as a great playwright. Her services to Ireland in supporting the new literature, translating into Anglo-Irish plays of Moliere, founding the Abbey Theatre, writing plays of the peasant life in Ireland, and thus bringing the theatre to the peasant, are indeed of great value. No other playwright has achieved such wide popularity for her plays of folk-life as Lady Gregory. Though Lady Gregory is a remarkable playwright and deserving of much praise,

she is primarily an entertainer and for such power will most aptly be remembered.

Of Lady Gregory, Edward Storer in the May 1914 issue of Living Age writing on "Dramatists of Today" says in part "Lady Gregory's work in connection with the Irish National Theatre has been daily recognized, but scant tribute has been paid her as a dramatist of the modern school, who has written comedies the equal in delicacy of any of our day. She has at least some of fifteen or sixteen plays to her name, ranging from the whimsical comicality of 'Hyacinth Halvey' to the grave beauty of 'Dervorgilla'.

"In the matter of technique Lady Gregory brings little to the modern drama. Her plays indeed do not smack of the theatre. They are curiously fresh and unconventional. One might call them even amateurish as certainly the notes which occasionally append to them are. Thus she writes of her "Goal Gate": - I like it better than any in the volume and I have never changed a word of it".

"One is tempted to think that of the dramatists of the Irish school she has given the truest presentment of the peasant life and thought of the day. It is a subject on which one should speak carefully unless one has expert knowledge, but there does seem to the reader who knows the Irish peasant only through the works of writers of the modern Irish school, a reality, an atmosphere, a sense of truth about Lady Gregory's peasant characters that we find in Mr. Yeats, for instance:--

"Mr. George Moore, it is true, in quite a recent paper has declared his opinion that Lady Gregory's beautiful speech consists of no more than a dozen turns of speech dropped into the pages of English so ordinary, that redeemed from these phrases, it might

appear in any newspaper without attracting attention.

"In spite of this one cannot help feeling that Lady Gregory's types are real enough and that her language is real enough too. There is no artifice about speeches such as this, except in the sense that all literature is artificial. Says an old woman of her dead husband--'I tell you there never set his foot on the floor of the world, and never told his secret to a woman so good a man'.

"It seems to me that in that sentence we get a strong illumination upon the Irish character, about which of course no Englishman is ever supposed to know anything. 'His foot on the floor of the world' seems to me a phrase typical of the innocent vain-gloriousness of the race, the kind of bragging naivete that we speak of as blarney. And 'never told his secret to a woman so good a man' is an expression, Biblical in its primitive strength, which reveals all the earth--redolent realism which clings to Irish life like the smell of peat to their cabins.

"Lady Gregory has written comedies which are not only the best comedies of the Irish National theatre, but which compare favorably with any that the English theatre has produced in the last twenty years or so. Her tragedies, however, full of fine lines and strong passages as they are, are too uneven and flimsy even to establish themselves permanently in any repertory".

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

The greatest genius of Irish drama is John Millington Synge. He was born at Rathfarnham, near Dublin, April 16, 1871. He received his education at Trinity College, Dublin, and traveled a great deal for several years. It was while in Paris, leading the life of a Bohemian, that he met W. B. Yeats who influenced him to

devote his attention to Irish literature. Synge heeded this urge of Yeats's and in 1898 went to the Aran Isles. He studied the people of that section, and wrote many sketches of their life and character. In 1903 he turned to the drama and began writing plays based upon Irish legends and incidents characteristic of Irish life. In 1904 he was made director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and contributed much to its fame. His best plays are "The Shadow of the Glen" 1903, and "Riders of the Sea" (1904) both one-act plays, and "The Well of the Saints" 1905, a three-act play, "The Playboy of the Western World" 1907, and "Deirdre of the Sorrows" 1910, not wholly completed at the time of his death in 1909. "The Playboy of the Western World" and "Deirdre of the Sorrows" are doubtless his greatest plays. A prose work "The Aran Islands" recounting his observations in the islands off the west coast of Ireland near Galway, is a very delightful work.

"Riders to the Sea" is a gripping tragedy. It is the result of a saturation with the Aran Islands and concerns the primitive life of the fishing people of that region. The work of a man who sought his theme from sorrow and passion, it shows the power of the sea and man's utter helplessness in resisting it. The picture presented is beautiful and strong. In form this one-act play can not be equaled; in content, it is powerfully great and constitutes high tragedy.

Maurya has sacrificed five sons to the sea. The youngest son, Bartley, goes to brave the sea and is brought home drowned, the sixth of Maurya's sons to be taken in such a way. Maurya is helpless and simply says in her Stoid realization that "Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a

deep grave, surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied". Great is the force of tragedy--"They're all gone now and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me--I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east and the surf is in the west--and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening". We feel the resignation of Maurya in her sorrowing or "keening", which is like a chorus. The play is a cry of the people of the islands against the gruesomeness of death, its dumb tragedy, and in this respect, it is true to life.

Doubtless, "The Riders to the Sea" is the most remembered of Synge's plays. The form and content are so perfect, and the suffering of the mother so pitifully made real, that the play deeply impresses and stirs one. Synge is an artist of greatness; strength and power, beauty in dialect, and skill in technique are his. He is deserving of the momentous praise and admiration which one has to bestow upon him for his beautifully painted pictures, and skillful mastery of words. Synge is the justification of the Irish Literary Theatre.

"In the Shadow of the Glen" is a one-act play based on a story heard by Synge in the Aran Islands, and the first of Synge's plays, produced in October 1903. Dan Burke suspects his wife of infidelity and decides to bring her to task. He pretends to be dead. Nora goes out in search of aid. While she is gone, her husband, an old man, sits up in bed where he is stretched out and talks to the tramp who had appeared at his cottage. He tells the tramp of his purpose in feigning death and then settles himself in bed under a sheet. Very soon his wife and Michael Dara, whom Dan

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believes Nora loves, enter. Dan overhears their conversation in which Nora expresses her folly in having married so old a man as Dan. Michael and Nora count the money Burke has left and plan their wedding to take place after the corpse has been laid in the ground a while:-

Nora---"Why would I marry you, Mike Dara? You'll be getting old and I'll be getting old, and in a little while, I'm telling you, you'll be sitting up in your bed--the way himself was sitting--with a shake in your face, and your teeth falling, and the white hair sticking out round you like an old bush where sheep do be leaping a gap. (Dan Burke sits up noiselessly from under the sheet, with his hand to his face. His white hair is sticking out round his head. Nora goes on slowly without hearing him.) It's a pitiful thing to be getting old, but it's a queer thing surely. It is a queer thing to see an old man sitting up there in his bed with no teeth in him, and a rough word in his mouth, and his chin the way it would take the bark from the edge of an oak board you'd have building a door--- God forgive me, Michael Dara, we'll all be getting old, but it's a queer thing surely".

Michael---"It's too lonesome you are from living a long time with an old man, Nora, and you're talking again like a herd that would becoming down from the thick mist (he puts his arm round her), but it's a fine life you'll have now with a young man--a fine life, surely".

(Dan sneezes violently. Michael tries to get to the door, but before he can do so Dan jumps out of bed in queer white clothes, with the stick in his hand, and goes over and puts his back against it).

Michael---"Son of God deliver us!"

Dan then orders his wife to leave the house and "it's not tomorrow or the next day, or any day of your life that you'll put your foot through it again". Mary in her anger is satisfied to leave with the tramp, while Michael and Dan drink to each other's health.

This play evidences Synge's ability as a dramatist of precision and intensity. It is a short play, yet it exhibits the qualities which are responsible for the success of his later plays, It combines realism with sardonic humor in a situation told in Anglo-Irish dialect. At first "In the Shadow of the Glen" met with little approval. The people believed that Synge was making unjust remarks to the peasant women of Ireland. Revisions followed so that now, there appears nothing of a libellous sort that could be offensive.

Though in all probability written in 1902, "The Tinker's Wedding" was not published until after "The Playboy of the Western World" had brought fame to Synge; it still remains unstaged by the Abbey Theatre. A comedy full of hilarity and provoking laughter, it depicts the unworthinesses of a priest and the abuse which he is given for refusing to marry Sarah Casey and Michael Byrne, who desire the wedding ceremony after years of married life. It is one of Synge's best comedies, but it would, if staged, bring about much indignation from the majority of the Irish people. (Synge's conscience was artistic, only; he was not scrupulous in matters of sanctity.) The Directors of the Abbey Theatre are wise in their decision not to present it.

In 1905 appeared Synge's "The Well of the Saints", a play containing an element of the supernatural. It concerns two old blind beggars, Martin and Mary Doul who get much pleasure out of

imagining themselves very beautiful. Their sight is restored by a wandering friar, the Saint, with water from the holy well, but they are disillusioned at the pictures of themselves, for Martin is very plain looking and weather-beaten, and his wife is ugly and old. They beg to be blind again so that they can be happy in their world of ideals; their wish is fulfilled. The conclusion of the play shows us that they are happy again in their blindness.

"I'll be getting my death now, I'm thinking, sitting alone in the cold air, hearing the night coming, and the blackbirds flying round in the briars crying to themselves, the time you'll hear one cart getting off a long way in the east, and another cart getting off in the west, and a dog barking maybe, and a little wind turning the sticks---"

"Ah, it's ourselves had finer sights than the like of them, I'm telling you when we were sitting a while back hearing the birds and bees humming in every need of the ditch, or when we'd be smelling the sweet, beautiful smell does be rising in the warm nights, when you do hear the swift flying things racing in the air, till we'd be looking up in our own minds into a grand sky, and seeing lakes, and big rivers, and fine hills for taking the plough---"

"I'm thinking it's a good right ourselves have to be sitting blind, hearing a soft wind turning round the little leaves of the spring and feeling the sun, and we not tormenting our souls with the sight of the gray days, and the holy men and the dirty feet is trampling the world".

"The Well of the Saints" was first produced in 1905, at the Abbey Theatre by the Irish National Theatre under the directorship of W. G. Fay. The following made up the cast:

Martin Doul----------------W. G. Fay
Mary Doul------------------Emma Vernon

Timmy----------------George Roberts
Molly Byrne----------Sara Allgood
Bride----------------Marie NicSchuiblaigh
Mat Simon------------P. Mac Schuibliaigh
The Saint------------F. J. Fay

In "Ireland's Literary Renaissance" Ernest Boyd says: "The theme of 'The Well of the Saints' is as universal as that of 'Riders of the Sea'. The blind beggars who regain their sight by the operation of a miracle and lose it again, together with the desire to see, have an interest far exceeding that which could be diminished by the fact that they resemble the personages in Clemenceau's 'Voile du Bonheur'. Whatever the analogies presented---Synge's Martin and Mary Doul are the specific creations of the author's genius. In this preference for the beauty of the imaginary world, as contrasted with the ugliness of reality revealed to them by the recovery of their sight, they are at once symbolic and personal. Surely we may see in their rejection of the commonplace facts of life, a hint of that attitude which made Synge recoil from the horrors of industrial progress and take refuge amongst a people whose imagination colored reality. It is only necessary to observe in what beautiful terms Martin Doul and his wife interpret the world as transfigured by illusion, to conclude that they express the author himself. By a natural movement of the spirit he clothes his dream in the language whose rhythms had captured and held him far from the scene of modern civilization. Preserving his characteristic interest in the picturesque realism of unspoiled life, Synge has given his peculiar imprint to the essentially Celtic drama of the conflict between the dream and the reality".

The best of Irish comedies is "The Playboy of the Western World". Its production raised Synge from a state of obscurity in 1907 to one of fame and great recognition. The play brought forth

a storm of protest among the Irish. Synge was declared to have aimed attacks against Irish characters. An Anti-Synge campaign was launched and the playwright was criticized blatantly by critics, accused of plagiarism, of prejudice, and national hatred. This opposition only enhanced the success of the play and contributed remarkably to Synge's fame as the author of this masterpiece.

In his preface to "The Playboy of the Western World" Synge tells of his dramatic standards: "In a good play, every speech should be as fully flavored as a nut or apply, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks". The diction of the play is excellent - simple, racy in Irish dialect; there is a distinctive and poetic charm in the speech of the peasant characters that has in it every quality of sweetness, and resembles music. The essence of simplicity, the speaking is rhythmic and beautiful, and naturally Irish. In every sense of the word "The Playboy of the Western World" is the greatest of Synge's contributions to the literature of the Irish movement. It is the justification of the Irish Theatre.

The germ of the story of this play was told to Synge by an acquaintance, a friendly shanachie, in the Aran Islands. A Connaught man that had killed his father with a spade was said to have been hiding in Innishmaan against capture by the police. Synge has greatly elaborated this thread into a well-rounded ingenious story. The arrangement of the plot is skilful; the char-

acterization vivid and unparalleled.

Christy Mahon appears at the tavern and boasts to the villagers that he has killed his father. The tale is received by these doting old men and women, and in such ignorant environment Christy finds himself a hero. The degenerates gloat over his crime of patricide and make Christy a victim of hero worship. He is so highly praised for his strength that he begins to esteem himself highly. Pegeen Mike, the shebeen keeper's daughter who is given to much romancing, falls in love with him. By the use of flowery language, Christy woos Pegeen, who is delighted that at last she has found a Prince Charming capable of uttering such beautiful love poetry. All such action makes Christy self-important.

Christy (indignantly)--"Starting from you, is it? (He follows her). I will not, then, and when the airs is warming in four months or five, it's then yourself and me should be pacing Neifin in the dews of night, the times sweet smells do be rising, and you'll see a little, shiny new moon, maybe, sinking on the hills.

Pegeen--(looking at him playfully) And it's that kind of a poacher's love you'd make, Christy Mahon, on the sides of Neifin, when the night is down?

Christy--It's little you'll think if my love's a poacher's, or an earl's itself, when you'll feel my two hands stretched around you, and I squeezing kisses on your puckered lips, till I'd feel a kind of pity for the Lord God is all ages sitting lonesome in His golden chair.

Pegeen--That'll be right fun, Christy Mahon, and any girl would walk her heart out before she'd meet a young man was like for eloquence, or talk at all.

Christy--(encouraged) Let you wait, to hear me talking, till we're

astray in Erris, when Good Friday's by drinking a sup from a well, and making mighty kisses with our wetted mouths, or gaming in a gap of sunshine, with yourself stretched back unto your necklace, in the flowers of the earth.

Pegeen--(in a low voice, moved by his tone), I'd be nice so, is it?

Christy--(with rapture). If the mitred bishops seen you that time, they'd be the like of the holy prophets, I'm thinking, do be straining the bars of Paradise to lay eyes on the Lady Helen of Troy, and she abroad, pacing back and forward, with a nosegay in her golden shawl."

Pegeen is given to fantasy and romanticism. She is enraptured by Christy's eloquence. In the midst of all the notoriety those at the inn give Christy, the father appears; the people who had idolized Christy now laugh scornfully at his story and treat him contemptuously. He is laughed at by everyone, even by the girls who had thought him a darling. He is therefore determined to complete the act of patricide that he may restore his bold reputation. He attempts to kill his father and is being handed to the police when his father comes to his aid, but Christy treats Mahon as an underling, when he defends him saying: "Go with you, is it? I will then, like a gallant captain with his heathen slave. Go on now and I'll see you from this day stewing my oatmeal and washing my spuds, for I'm the master of all fights from now. (Pushing Mahon). Go on, I'm saying." "Is it me?" says Mahon. "Not a word out of you. Go on from this," commands Christy. "Glory be to God! I am crazy again," cries Mahon. Pegeen is sorrowful and laments that Christy must leave her: "Oh my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only Playboy of the Western World." Thus ends the play.

This drama is delightful. It is true dramatic literature in every sense of the word. The development of the action of the play parallels the development of the character Christy. Reality, joy, humor, and touches of the romantic abound in it. The region of Mayo is clearly in the foreground; the life of the primitives in the section of Mayo coast is emphasized. The characters belong there; their language is full of racy idiom.

Satire is also a quality evident in the play. Whether it be directed to Ireland especially more than any country is not known. The Irish were offended at it and raised a riot at its performance. They believed Synge was satirizing and ridiculing the character of the Irishman. To them he seemed to convey the idea that all the Irishmen gloried in self-exaltation and that Christy's crime of patricide was looked upon by all as a deed of bravery. In the preface to "The Tinker's Wedding", which followed publication after the fight over "The Playboy" Synge sayd, "I do not think that these country people who have so much humor themselves, will mind being their own comedies."

But the large audience on the first night of the production of "The Playboy" January 26, 1907 broke into an uproar and state of disorder. Synge himself was there to witness it. Hissing and booing were heard at the end of the third act and the telegram which had been sent to Mr. Yeats (who fortunately could not be present as he was lecturing in Scotland) after the first act stating that the play was successful, had to be contradicted by another telling of the hostile riot among the audience. "Audience broke up in disorder at the word shift" was the telegram sent Mr. Yeats.

When the Abbey Players came to America in 1911, hostility was aroused. Propaganda against the players had begun upon announce-

ment that the company was to appear in the United States. Dublin had sent word that it disproved of "The Playboy of the Western World", and had ordered restraint of its production. Boston audiences had at first staged some opposition as a result of the articles printed in the newspapers. The Boston Post of October 4, contained a criticism by Dr. J. T. Gallagher denouncing the Irish plays as -- 'vulgar, unnatural, antinational, and anti-Christian---vulgar, vile, beastly and unnatural, so calculated to contaminate, degrade, and defame a people and all they hold sacred and dear'. * The Gaelic American Society sent out a resolution of the United Irish Societies pledging to drive the vile thing ("The Playboy") from the stage of New York. All this fury by way of opposition was effected before its appearance in American and was based upon propaganda said to have been received from Dublin.

Mr. William Leahy, secretary to the Mayor of Boston, was sent to report upon the play, and a censor of the Police Commissions also was ordered to comment upon his findings. Both critics found nothing of sufficient offense to warrant its prohibition in Boston. Mr. Leahy had already given approval of "Birthright" and "Hyacinth Halvey", which were produced before "The Playboy". His remark concerning "The Playboy of the Western World" was 'If obscenity is to be found on the stage in Boston, it must be sought elsewhere and not at the Plymouth Theatre'. * He said also: 'The mistake, however, lies in taking the pictures literally. Some of these playwrights, of course, are realists or copyists of life and like others of their kind they happen to prefer strong brine to rose-water and see truth chiefly in the ugliness of things. But as it happens that two remarkable men among the Irish playwrights are

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* Our Irish Theatre - Lady Gregory

not realists at all. Yeats and Synge are symbolists, and their plays are as fantastic and fabulous as the Tales of the Round Table'. There was little trouble in Boston after the booing and hissing of the first week. All the plays from them on were agreeably received by Boston audiences.

At Lowell, Providence, Chicago, Philadelphia, New Haven, Washington, New York and other American cities the Abbey Players presented their dramas. There was some rioting; however it died down and when the American tour was completed a great success had been achieved. "The Playboy" was known to everyone; Synge, its author, the Abbey Players and their directors, famous. Of the criticisms appearing in the periodicals during the visit of the Abbey Theatre the following are significant:

From "The Gaelic American". October 14, 1911.

IRISHMEN WILL STAMP OUT "THE PLAYBOY".

October 4, 1911:--"Resolved--that we, the United Irish American Societies of New York, make every reasonable effort, through a committee, to induce those responsible for the presentation of "The Playboy" to withdraw it, and failing in this we pledge ourselves as one man to use every means in our power to drive the vile thing from the stage, as we drove "McFadden's Row of Flats" and the abomination produced by the Russell Brothers, and we ask the aid in this work of every decent Irishman, woman, and of the Catholic Church, whose doctrines and devotional practices are held up to scorn and ridicule in Synge's monstrosity."

From "The New York Times". November 28, 1911.

When Christopher Mahon said: "I killed my father a week and a half ago for the likes of that, instantly voices began to call from all over the theatre: SHAME! SHAME! A potato swept through the air

from the gallery and smashed against the wings. Then came a shower of vegetables that rattled against the scenery and made the actors duck their heads and fly behind the stage setting for shelter. A potato struck Miss Magee, and she, Irish like, drew herself up and glared defiance. Men were rising in the gallery and balcony and crying out to stop the performance. In the orchestra several men stood up and shook their fists. "Go on with the play", came an order from the stage manager, and the players took their places and began to speak their lines. The tumult broke out more violently than before, and more vegetables came sailing through the air and rolled about the stage. Then began the fall of soft cubes that broke as they hit the stage. At first these filled the men and women in the audience and on the stage with fear, for only the disturbers knew what they were. Soon all knew. They were capsules filled with assfoetida, and their odour was suffocating and most revolting. One of the theatre employees had run to the street to ask for police protection at the outset of the disturbance, but the response was so slow that the ushers and the doortenders raced up the stairs and threw themselves into a crowd of men who were standing and yelling "SHAME"!

February 1, 1912:--Chicago's City Council erred in passing an order directing the mayor and the chief of police to stop the production "The Playboy of the Western World", according to an opinion sent to Mayor Harrison yesterday by William H. Sexton, the city's corporation council.

The brief was prepared by William Dillon, brother of John Dillon the Irish national leader, one of Mr. Sexton's assistants. It held that the council order was of no legal effect, although the mayor suppress the play if he decided that it was immoral or against

public policy. Mr. Dillon further declared that the mayor would not be legally right in prohibiting the production.

"I read three pages of the book," declared Mayor Harrison, "and instead of finding anything immoral I found that the whole thing was wonderfully stupid. I shall abide by the corporation's opinion."

"With Fifteen-ninety or Sixteen-sixteen
We end Cervantes, Marrot, Nashe or Greene;
Then Sixteen-thirteen till two score and nine
Is Crashaw's niche, that honey-lipped divine.
And so when all my little work is done
They'll say I came in Eighteen-seventy-one,
And died in Dublin. What year will they write
For my poor passage to the stall of Night?"

This poem of Synge's was being printed at the hour of his death. It had been his hope and desire to live at least until he was forty, but that wish was not granted. At the time of his death, March 24, 1909, he was writing the tragedy noted for its musical sweetness, "Deirdre of the Sorrows". Like Yeats, he had recourse to the greatest of Irish legends, the story of Deirdre, but unlike Yeats, who concentrated upon only a portion of his legend, Synge made use of the whole. It was revised by Lady Gregory and Yeats after Synge's death and served as a reminder of his greatness and his likelihood of a remarkable future, greater than his past.

"Deirdre of the Sorrows" is an exceedingly beautiful story as reproduced in the drama of Synge. No other dramatist of the Irish movement has surpassed Synge in his treatment of this deathless legend, which he made correspond with the original. Synge's Deir-

dre is a beautiful living woman of great power. She, like Synge, expresses her dread of death, and the time when she and Naisi must pass through the stages of old age and death. It hurts her to think of giving up youth and beauty. With such thoughts she finds somewhat of a blessing in death after Naisi is gone.

Deirdre--"I have put away sorrow like a show that is worn out and muddy, for it is I have had a life that will be envied by great companies. It was not by a low birth I made kings uneasy, and they sitting in the halls of Emain. It was not a low thing to be chosen by Conchubar, who was wise, and Naisi had no match for bravery. It is not a small thing to be rid of grey hairs, and the loosening of the teeth. It was the choice of lives we had in the clear woods, and in the grave we're save, surely------

Conchubar--"She will do herself harm".

Deirdre (throwing Naisi's knife). "I have a little key to unlock the prison of Naisi you'd shut upon his youth forever. Keep back, Conchubar; for the High King who is your master has put his hands between us. (She half turns to the grave.) It was sorrows were foretold, but great joys were my share always; yet it is a cold place I must go to be with you, Naisi, and it's cold your arms will be this night that were warm about my neck so often---It's a pitiful thing to be talking out when your ears are shut to me. It's a pitiful thing, Conchubar, you have done this night that in Emain; yet a thing will be a joy and triumph to the ends of life and time." (She presses knife into her heart and sinks into the grave).

"Deirdre of the Sorrows" was not produced until 1910, a year after Synge's death. The cast was made up as follows:

Lavarcham-----------------Sara Allgood
Old Woman-----------------Eileen O'Doherty

Owen----------------J. A. O'Rourke
Conchubor-----------Arthur Sinclair
Fergus--------------Sydney J. Morgan
Deirdre-------------Marie O'Neill
Naisi---------------Fred O'Donovan
Ninnle--------------J. M. Kerrigan
Ardan---------------John Carrick
Soldiers------------Ambrose Power, Harry Young

Noticing the style of Synge, one finds that pious ejaculations are common in his plays, as in the dramas of most Irish playwrights. "God have mercy on his soul!", "God rest his soul!", "God forgive him!", "The Almighty God reward you!", may be found in several of his plays. Irishisms which Synge makes noticeable are the use of "at all, at all", "do be", for "am or are", the intensive use of "itself", "himself", and "herself", and the peculiar use of "it". Words of color had a great appeal to Synge. He frequently mentions Nature - the stars, the ocean, the moon, and the rain, which reference shows his love for nature.

Synge is the greatest of the writers of Irish drama. He is Ireland's representative in modern drama. "Riders to the Sea" and "The Playboy of the Western World" have a permanent place in literature and take precedence over his other plays. Realism instead of pure romanticism dominates his works. "The Playboy" does reach the realm of romanticism, but for the most part Synge is a realist. Comedy and tragedy are both his fields. The comedy is sardonic and ironical and he shows by such usage that he is opposed to moral drama. He scorns didactic drama and drama of reform. He is an artist in the true sense of the word - the justification of the Irish Theatre. The finest qualities of his dramas are his ingenious plots, characterization, and freshness of style which surpasses that of Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats and is distinctive in its charm. His diction is simple, poetic and beautiful, exemplary of the peasant life with which he was so familiar, and full of superb richness.

Synge's creative powers also were great; to Yeats we are indebted for recognizing them, and urging him to employ them in Irish literature rather than French. His contact with peasants and fishermen of the Aran Islands, of Wicklow, West Kerry, Galway and Mayo, resulted in richly literary productions to drama and poetry. His influence has been felt upon John Masefield and Eugene O'Neill and, doubtless, will be felt by future dramatists. Though his contributions to drama have not been numerous, it must be remembered that his life was a short one, and that all his dramas were written in about six years. It is for the great quality of his dramatic work that Synge is credited and placed in highest rank as the greatest dramatist Ireland has produced.

EDWARD MARTYN

Edward Martyn, a founder of the Irish Literary Theatre, was born in Tillyra, County Galway in 1860. He received his education at Oxford and remained in London after his university career, saturating himself with things aesthetic and gaining in contact with European culture. He possessed wealth, but he did not lavish it upon himself; rather, he chose to live simply and so win a personal battle against materialism for idealism. He had little contact with ordinary life; he lived alone in a world of ideals. He loved all that was artistically good and fine in life, and had an absorbing interest in things romantic. His world was one of conflict between materialism and idealism. This philosophy of life is expressed indirectly in all his works.

Martyn was a great enthusiast of Ibsen. He read his plays assiduously, familiarized himself with every character, speech, and action, and recognized Ibsen's greatness. In all things European and cultural, Martyn was interested; he stands out con-

spicuously as an Irishman whose dominant concern was with culture and things idealistic. He was out of sympathy with anything of a literary aspect that introduced reform in it. He held that a dramatist should not be a moralist and that the language of drama should be high, lofty, and intellectual. In England his plays were not produced; audiences for his drawing-room plays, the producers knew, could not be obtained; consequently, Martyn turned to Ireland, for he believed that in the Irish Literary Theatre and in the Irish audience, there was an idealism founded upon the ancient genius of the land. He received the Irish Literary Theatre proposal of Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats and agreed to give the project his utmost support. There he believed could be found a theatre where his plays could be acted; so he guaranteed financial aid, and gave his money freely to defray expenses of the initial year of the enterprise.

Martyn wrote little of peasant life. He was more concerned with drama of landlords, politicians, and priests. He was of the opinion that European ideals, ideas, and culture should not be sacrificed in drama; folk drama did not interest him, neither did Ireland to any great extent. New developments in drama would soon be enacted; he hoped through Ireland's contact with Europe, it would refrain from centering dramatic attention wholly upon itself, and thus obtain a position in drama envied by other nations. He wrote his plays and became a founder of the Irish Literary Theatre with this ambition in mind.

Of Martyn's contributions to the Irish Literary movement, only two are deserving of consideration: "Heather Field" his greatest play, and "Maeve", a psychological drama. "An Enchanted Sea", "The Tale of a Town" - the basis of George Moore's "Bend-

ing of the Bough", and "The Placehunters", received only passing recognition. "The Heather Field" has been acclaimed 'the most thoughtful of modern prose plays written in English, the best constructed, the most endurable to a thoughtful audience'. *
It is a very powerful drawing-room play, symbolic in tone, and concerns the individual, Carden Tyrrell, a landlord. It was very popularly received upon its first presentation with "The Countess Cathleen" in 1899, though it was not remarkably acted. The play represents a conflict between idealism and materialism. Carden Tyrrell, a landlord of western Ireland, has abandoned his world of idealism to satisfy his wife, a materialist. He tills a heather field and endeavors to make it into fit pasture land. He mortgages all he owns to enrich the land and make it practical for grazing. His wife objects to his financial risks, and plans to have a physician declare Tyrrell incapable of controlling his property. Barry Ussher, a friend of Tyrrell interrupts and prevents this taking place. The tenants on the land whom Tyrrell has been forced to evict turn against him and he seeks police protection to escape murder. Signs of his going mad are noticed; this mental condition is aggravated by his staying indoors to escape his tenants. His son brings him a bunch of heather buds which act symbolizes the shattering of his ideal; the fields of the mountain are returning to waste. In his state of idealism, reality triumphs, all is lost. Tyrrell's madness makes him believe he is a youth again, and he says, "The rain across a saffron sun trembles like gold harp strings through the purple Irish spring--The voices-- I hear them now triumphant in a silvery glory of a song!" It is a truly dramatic play, very gripping, powerful, and intense. The defect of the play lies in the dialogue which seems unfitting to

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* The Irish Drama - Andrew F. Malone.

the characters, and unnatural.

"Maeve" is a drama based upon a Cuchulain legend. It relates the story of Maeve O'Heynes, a young girl dreamer, and Peg Inerny, her old nurse. On the eve of Maeve's marriage to Fitz Walter, a wealthy Englishman, whom she is wedding against her will to please her father, she walks in the section of the Burren Hills, in Clare, with her nurse and listens to the fascinating tales that Peg Inerny tells of the fairies and little people. The good old nurse causes Maeve to believe that she is the Great Queen Maeve and that the fairies have brought about her change. Peg assures Maeve of the fairies' presence and the two wander along the countryside believing that those of their dreams are accompanying them. Maeve meets her lover and is happy; he is the man of her ideals. Entranced she returns to the castle and, as she looks from her window, she sees Queen Maeve with her retinue of harpers and pages enter. "I see them now, and I see others who lived long before them, and are buried in that green cairn. Oh, I am dying because I am exiled from such beauty." The soul of Maeve is taken by the troup to the cairn. When Finola, Maeve's sister, goes to look for Maeve to assist her in preparation for the wedding, she finds her cold and lifeless by the castle window. Maeve has gone to the land of her supernatural lover, to "that silvery beauty which survives in the human heart, which we see shimmering to the horizon, leading our longings beyond the world, and we hear it in our hearts like silver harps and strings, sounding seemingly of themselves, for no hand is by."

"Maeve" is a delightful play of fantasy. Edward Martyn demonstrates again his belief in the struggle between a world of idealism and a world of materialism. In rather poetic expressions he

causes the reader to conceive Maeve's vision and to be captivated and allured by it. No one can read or witness the play without being moved by it. There is a definite implication of symbolism in "Maeve". Peg Inerny and Maeve are symbolic of Ireland's resistance to Britain's ways. Mr. Yeats's interpretation of the play told in "Beltaine", February 1900, is that Martyn wished it to "symbolize Ireland's choice between English materialism, as well as the choice of every individual soul".

Edward Martyn's conflict with Lady Gregory and Yeats regarding the type of drama the Irish Literary Theatre should present finally resulted in his withdrawal from the movement. Martyn believed that the drama should uplift by way of appeal to the intellectual group in society and therefore he purposely refrained from including the peasantry in his dramas. Lady Gregory and Yeats held that folk drama was the sort Ireland needed. The so-called drawing-room play was all right for the middle classes of the cities, but the uplift of the peasant folk drama, plays of the legendary people, and characters of romance, were necessary. A greater conflict than with the standards of the Irish movement ensued. Martyn's play "The Tale of a Town" was refused by Lady Gregory, Mr. Yeats, and Mr. Moore. Because of their determination not to produce it, Martyn withdrew his support in the enterprise and, in 1902, instead of contributing financially to the erection of a theatre, he established a fund of fity thousand dollars for the founding and perpetuating of a Palestrina choir in the Catholic Pro-Cathedral in Dublin. "The Tale of a Town" received rough treatment, but Martyn allowed the distinguished personages in the Irish Literary Theatre to do as they would with the play. George Moore, a novelist playwright of no mean renown and an assistant in founding The Irish Literary Theatre

changed "The Tale of a Town", rewrote almost all of it under the title--"The Bending of the Boughs", and produced it at the Irish Literary Theatre in 1900. Martyn staged "The Tale of a Town", himself in 1905 when he owned a little theatre. As director of the Irish Literary Theatre carrying out his own ideals, producing intellectual plays of current interest by European writers, instead of purely Irish folk drama, Martyn has been very influential.

GEORGE MOORE

Though born in County Mayo in 1853, George Moore, the greatest novelist Ireland has yet produced, spent only the days of infancy and boyhood in his native country. He traveled and settled in London and Paris before feeling at the age of forty-two the desire to return to Ireland and give it a new literature and language. Under the influence of Edward Martyn, he assisted in the establishment of the Irish Theatre, gathered the company together and rehearsed in Ireland and England; as a great novelist and critic, consequently, his assistance in founding the theatre and upholding its ideals were of extreme value. To be sure, he was not as especially Irish in sympathy as were the other three founders, Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Martyn, yet his career had been of such literary significance that he was considered a great asset. His plays had not been staged, but he had contributed worthwhile criticiam in the way of publicity and had been intimately connected with the Independent Theatre of London, thereby materially assisting the Irish dramatic enterprise. Moore remained in the Irish Literary Theatre only three seasons, however, withdrawing at the same time as Edward Martyn. His ideals were similar to those of Martyn; neither believed in strictly Irish drama, a drama separately Irish in appeal and content. Yeats and Lady Gregory were trium-

phant in upholding the standards of poetic drama based upon folklore; Martyn and Moore had to give way to their ideals.

"The Bending of the Bought" and "Diarmuid and Grania", which he wrote in collaboration with Yeats, were his only plays produced by the Irish Literary Theatre. The first of these was a re-writing of Martyn's "A Tale of a Town". Moore completely changed the setting of the play from Ireland to Scotland, improved the drama in general and made it more patriotic in appeal so that it became a finer work than the original. "Diarmuid and Grania", the prose play, has never been published. It was produced by the Irish Literary Theatre in 1901 by a very poor company. Though it dealt with the old Irish legend of Diarmuid, Grania, and Finn, it was not enthusiastically received and, consequently, is today forgotten.

One remembers Moore's histrionic talent as less significant than his ability as a novelist and critic. His plays in comparison with his novels are indicative of the fact that he was an amateur playwright, that he lacked technique, and that he had never really mastered the art of the drama. Edward Martyn and George Moore were somewhat alike in this regard. Neither could be said to be more than amateur playwrights, yet both contributed greatly to dramatic achievements in Ireland. "Mr. Martyn has more originality of theme, more intimacy with Irish character, a surer instinct for effective situation, and more nobility of intention, though Mr. Moore's greater power over words gives his plays a dignity as art that the plays of Mr. Martyn do not attain". * Mr. Martyn was a sincere and loyal Irishman in his writings in many respects; he loved his religion (Catholicism) yet he was little concerned with the peasantry who were of the same faith, for the majority. Moore, though not European in culture to as great a degree as his intimate

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* The Irish Drama -- Andrew F. Malone.

friend, Martyn, was not Irish in sympathy. He delighted in reviling his country and his religion; sneeringly he ridiculed both, yet were it not for these outrageous attacks upon these great institutions, Moore would have lacked the popularity which his "Hail and Farewell" - ("Ave, Salve et Vale") brought him. In Ireland he was thought an evil influence on account of his antipathy to things Irish. However, he was a founder of the Irish Literary Theatre, assisting in the selection of able actors in London, and aiding greatly in the way of publicity. For these endeavors he must be regard as an instrument of force in the artistic development of the Irish Literary Theatre.

GEORGE RUSSELL

George Russell ("A. E.") is a mystical poet, with but little indication of becoming a playwright. Because he was known for his verses, his turning dramatist was a surprise to many. Mr. Russell attempted (1902) drama in "Deirdre" not from any inward impulse, but because of the enthusiasm of a group of young men - literati - who wanted plays that should be the quality of the nation and the work of standard writers. For the Irish National Dramatic Company he wrote "Deirdre", blocking it out in six hours and finishing it in three days for rehearsal. It is a decorative rather than a dramatic play.

Russell collected verses of known and unknown poets and poetesses in "New Songs" (1904). To these six poets was dedicated "The Divine Vision" (1904), his last volume of verse and two earlier volumes were dedicated to poet mystics.

"A. E." was looked to as a leader, a high priest, a seer who delivered religious dicta, song and wisdom. He was one of the beginners of the Irish Literary Revival. From the study of the universal, he and his young friends (the Hermetic Society) came

to the national, to the study of folk lore, to the discussion of things mystic. A dreamer, he was "The Irish Emerson" and a true mystic. Scores of ambitious youths came to him for advice and friendly counsel.

The typical poem of "A. E." is that in which his soul is lifted to participation in Universal Spirit by visual contact with beautiful things of the phenomenal world. The beauties of the sky are such to him that he is "lost within the 'Mother's Being'." He uses splendid symbols - massed clouds and sweeping lights of diamond, sapphire, amethyst; the still black of heaven thrilling with far stars, the purples of twilight horizons. Rarely does he write of the sweet things of earth. His poems on death are little different from those celebrating the soul's absorption into the Universal Spirit. His mood is so pre-occupied with spiritual things that many times he makes the reader feel lonely. Of love of country, countryside, and women he writes when he does write of "loved earth things". Only about a fourth of his poems have the human note dominant. Frequently he uses the picture of the concrete only as the symbol of the universal. The reason Mr. Russell must make use of the supernatural in his poems with earthly titles is because everywhere he goes in Ireland he sees spirits. More than a score of "A. E.'s" poems are suggested by Irish places, Irish legends, Irish loves, Irish exiles.

Since "A. E." is a Universal Spiritualist, he is an optimist. He tires of earth and sighs for heaven.

Mr. Russell has, in general, command of form, melody, harmony, distinction. Each poem is dependent for its chief appeal on one mood, thought, or dream, rather than on fine phrasing. The poems are short - intimations, suggestions - intangible themes

often resembling another. To some their language is difficult to understand. There is a definitely unchanging sameness of quality to all his verse.

Mr. Russell is the interpreter of the Ireland of peace and of the greater peace of the spiritual world. He is the possessor of the world beyond the world, the mystic whose "spirit rolls into the vast of God".

SEUMAS O'KELLEY

Seumas O'Kelley, a very promising young dramatist, died in 1919 in the zenith of great popularity as a gifted playwright, novelist, and short-story writer. He had been connected with other theatrical companies before joining the Abbey Theatre in 1910, and had produced one excellent play at the Theatre of Ireland in 1909, "The Shuiler's Child". "The Bribe" - 1913, "The Parnellite" - 1917, and "Meadowsweet" - 1919, are his other great contributions to Irish drama.

"The Shuiler's Child", like all his plays, is a thesis drama, and deals somewhat with the sordid, sombre, and dark side of life,- (O'Kelley's very nature, one of seriousness, is reflected in his plays). The leading part, that of the character Moll Woods, the "shuiler" - a vagabond beggar, was admirably played by the great actress Maire NicShuibhlaigh at its first production in 1909. Being a play of great dramatic effectiveness and based upon social problems of the day, it created a great impression upon the Irish public.

The story of "The Shuiler's Child" is this: Moll Woods, the shuiler, in her wanderings, comes to the home of the O'Hea's where an adopted child makes the childless couple happy. Moll discovers the child to be her son Phil, whom she had abandoned and sent to

the workhouse on account of her poverty. She is happy and joyful upon meeting her son and wishes to take him with her, but she meets opposition in the O'Hea's who have learned to love the boy. At this time an official from the workhouse appears and criticizes the manner in which the O'Hea's have been bringing up the child. Moll hates to have her son returned to the workhouse, as the official threatens; so she resolves to plead that he be returned to her. Her plea is granted; Moll sets out on the road again and soon arrives at the cottage of the O'Hea's. The O'Hea's fear that Phil may not receive the proper treatment from Moll, and are just about to complain to the authorities, when an officer of the law arrives and arrests Moll for child-desertion. The law takes her to prison; Phil is left with the O'Hea's. It is a very gripping play; the human element has great appeal, and the pathos of the whole tragedy is indicative of the realism of its author.

"The Bribe" is also a social play, of less value dramatically than "The Shuiler's Child", yet worthy of the popularity which Irish audiences gave it. "The Parnellite" of 1917 is another realistic play, based upon the deception and injustices which effected the downfall of Parnell. It is an excellent Irish play and very good as far as technique is concerned. O'Kelley's sympathies and feelings, as a staunch supporter of this political leader, are presented realistically in the play. He shows himself to be very bitter enemy of those responsible for the cowardly acts which led to Parnell's defeat. "Meadowsweet" is unlike the previous plays in that it is a comedy. It was first staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1919, and has had frequent revivals since that time.

O'Kelley's dramatic works show his own personality to a great

extent. In him was an element of the tragic, the serious and sombre. Born in Galway, Connacht, and therefore, as the story goes that Connachtmen are pensive, he possessed that characteristic of fondness for meditation which he exhibited in his writings, in his dramatic works, especially. Ibsenian influence is also evident in O'Kelley's plays. All his characters are realistically portrayed as men and women of his time, braving the social problems of contemporary Irish life. By the death of O'Kelley, Irish literature, most particularly the drama, was deprived of many superior works which would have surpassed all of his other literary endeavors.

ST. JOHN G. ERVINE

Excellence in characterization is a dominant proclivity of Mr. St. John G. Ervine. So vividly are his people portrayed that they live in the memory as acquaintances with distinction and with personalities. A one-act play "The Magnanimous Lover" (1912 production) and the year before, "Mixed Marriage" (1911) are typical. The latter play develops from trouble which arises from differences in religion - Catholic and Protestant. There are bitterness and strife, speeches and denunciations, riots of words and riots of men, a strike, and the murder of Catholic Nora, betrothed. The characters are boldly typed in Ervine word splashes - well drawn.

A depicting of life as he, son of a working man in the shipyards of Belfast, knew it; a natural humor arising out of the situation described in his plays; an optimism of a North of Ireland playwright - in these respects does St. John Ervine differ from other authors of the North from whom we have received pictures of its hardness and bigotry.

"The Magnanimous Lover" is the betrayer who will wed the wronged woman to make her "honest" - after years of neglect and

disloyalty. The strong power of the play is the heroine, Maggie Cather. Highly dramatic, perhaps unpleasant, is the role - the undisguised emotion of a girl, facing alone for ten years, a life for which her old-time lover now seeks through fear of God's judgment to atone.

Accurate in characterization, amusing in its bitter satire, is "The Critics" which was produced in the Abbey Theatre in November, 1913. It was a reprisal to the criticism which "The Magnanimous Lover" had been subjected by the Dublin press. He exposes the incompetent criticism to which Irish plays were piteously treated - the "critics" of plays being the same people who reported dog shows and political meetings. Public taste was of a low standard and such criticism kept the standard low. Belligerent courage is Ervine's great quality and had he chosen to live and work in Ireland rather than in England, this quality could well have been felt in Belfast or in Dublin. He ridicules his own fellow-citizens of Belfast in a slight sketch produced in March 1914 in "The Orangeman".

Unquestionably the finest Ervine play, one of the great plays of the modern stage, is "John Ferguson", produced while the author was manager of the Theatre in November, 1915. The worst and the best of Ulster Protestant character are found in the play. "John Ferguson" is a play deeply felt and sincere. In it Ervine, the realistic dramatist, has created a character hitherto unknown to the stage. His faith was too weak to help him meet strongly the facts of life; when action was useless, his faith did not comfort him, but served to deaden his sorrow; it was all he had to use - a sedative aid. Its lack was, for his wife, even greater. As Hardy made Fate play with Tess and Jude, so does Ervine make Fate play with John and his wife, Sarah.

"These Fergusons are little people, but they can show life great, life tragic, as well as the kings and the aristocrats. Their stoicism is ennobling to the audience, even if they wear no crown and work with their hands. They do not speak a language that rises to poetry, their emotions are all subdued; but they do present the Northern Irish peasant as he had never before been presented to the world. His very defects come from his qualities; his dourness, his staccato speech, his religious fanaticism, his contempt for his more soft-spoken compatriots in Ireland's other provinces." *

John Ferguson is a man indomitable in his religious faith, affectionate, and rather frail physically. The local miller, Witherow, to whom his farm is mortgaged, is a tyrant who threatens to foreclose. John is ill, his son is unfit to make a success of the farm, no helpful letter from a brother in America is received, and hope has vanished. Jimmy Caesar, a mean but wealthy grocer, inspired with a hatred for Witherow, offers to clear the mortgage if Ferguson's daughter, Hannah, will marry him. The girl feels the family safety is dependent upon her sacrifice and consents, although her parents have done nothing to persuade her to marry Caesar. She soon realizes that marriage with a man whom she despises is impossible. Word is sent to Witherow to foreclose. Hannah is seduced by Witherow and the despairing Caesar threatens to murder him. Ferguson, ill, goes out to save Caesar from ruin, fearing his threatened murderous attempt may succeed. John fails, and the next morning a woebegone Caesar returns with failing courage. Witherow is found shot dead, and circumstances cause the arrest of Caesar who protests his innocence. A letter from America brings the needed money, delayed by a mistaken date and mail. An

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* The Irish Drama - Andrew F. Malone.

anguished Hannah with religious faith broken is protestant. The father's faith is unshaken - but the great blow falls. The brother Andrew confesses that he shot Witherow, believing Caesar lacked sufficient courage. He is going to the people to confess. Then Ferguson's faith totters and he urges his son to escape. His children restore him to his faith and go off to the police. Left alone with his wife, he picks up the Bible and reads to her of David receiving the news of the death of Absalom:

"And the King was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept: and as he went, thus he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, my son -- my son". (His voice ends in a sob. The Bible falls from his hands. There is a low moan from his wife.)

"The Island of Saints, and the Way to Get out of It" was Ervine's farewell to Ireland, staged in 1920 and not worthy of its author. His greatness lies in "John Ferguson".

LENNOX ROBINSON

Lennox Robinson, the son of a clergyman of southwestern Ireland, spent his childhood and youth in Bandon Valley. From the time he was ten years old he had been writing, and as he grew older edited an amateur magazine. At the Abbey Theatre in Cork he saw a new acting, a new art of stage, and he felt that his work lay henceforth in drama. When but twenty-two (1908, October 8) his first play, "The Clancy Name" was put on for the Abbey Theatre. A reprinted version was put on by the National Theatre Society at the Abbey Theatre on September 30, 1909. It was followed by "The Crossroads" (1909), "Harvest" (1910), "Patriots" (1912). The themes of all these plays "hit home" at Irish institutions.

Robinson, a senior in point of time, has also had the greatest

number of plays produced. He is the most important of the younger Irish dramatists. He is an actor of distinction, and has been a Manager of The Irish Theatre for many years, and is now the Producer and Director of the Theatre. He has written extensively on the drama, and for some time was a critic on the staff of a leading London newspaper. He is one of the founders of the Dublin Drama League, which produces plays of leading European and American dramatists in Dublin.

"The Clancy Name" is a melodrama which presents a careful study of the Irish mother dominated by racial pride. "The Cross Roads", a longer play, is a study of marriage - a loveless marriage, and one of revolting misery. "Harvest" typifies Robinson's earlier plays. It depicts the evil consequences of applying to a country folk a type of education which fits them for a metropolitan life only. The play was less drama than social propaganda. "Patriots" gives evidence of the ability of Robinson to deal with a high theme of Irish political conditions in a tragic manner. The play vividly presents a turning-point in Irish politics. No one (at the climax of the patriot's tragedy) can be found to attend his meeting and the keeper of the hall remarks as he closes the hall, "Time to go to the pictures after all." "Patriots" is one of Lennox Robinson's plays; in thought, dialogue, and construction, it is his best.

A play dealing with the abortive rebellion of Robert Emmet in 1803 is the theme of Robinson's "The Dreamers" (1915) in which the author says, "There is fact and there is fancy."

"The Whiteheaded Boy" (1916) is regarded as Lennox Robinson's masterpiece. By this play he is known throughout the English-speaking world. It is essentially satirical comedy, filled with foolish and delightful people. Its humor is derived from the

nature of its people. Its good humor is a development of Robinson's own perspective. It is the finest comedy written since the death of Synge.

"The Lost Leader" was produced in 1918. Parnell is the hero in the character of Lucius Lenihan. "The Lost Leader" was not a great stage success and was the last of Robinson's political plays for the time being.

In November 1922, a masterpiece of satirical comedy was produced in "Crabbed Youth and Age". It is a delightful one-act play. It seems to be an indication of a new Robinson - it may be the influence of the Spanish dramatists Sierra and Benevente, in whose work Robinson was deeply interested. "Never the Time and the Place" (1924), "Portrait" (1925), "The White Blackbird" (1925), "The Big House" (1926), and later "The Far-off Hills" and "Give a Dog" are on the Robinson list.

As the sole representative, progressive representative of Abbey Theatre's earlier years, Robinson is to be depended upon to write great drama. His fine satirical genius may carry him to further heights for the Irish theatre.

PADRAIC COLUM

The youngest member connected with the Irish Literary Revival group interested in poetry and drama, was Padraic Colum. Born 1881 in the county Longford, the rich midland section of Ireland, he moved to Dublin in his youth and accepted a position as clerk in the clearing house of the Irish Railway. In Dublin he met leaders in the Literary Revival and became friendly with them and a few politicians. A lover of literature, he read extensively and admired Ibsen and Materlinck. He wrote plays based upon the Early Irish legendary period and at the age of nineteen he submitted dramas to an Irish society known as "The Daughters of Erin"; his

first successful play, "Broken Soil", was staged in 1903. Colum did not keep to the field of Irish mythology as the source for his plots. To be sure he began his career as a playwright by writing "Children of Lir" from the "Three Sorrows of Story Telling", and a historical play dealing with Brian Boru. He did not win great recognition from these plays based upon old Irish themes; however, his "The Broken Soil" produced at the Abbey Theatre in December 1903 established him as a reputable dramatist. This play, rewritten in 1907 and given the title "The Fiddler's House", is his best play. It shows a peasant's longing to take the road and his abandoning the farm for the life of a vagabond. Conn Hourican, the fiddler, says, "I'm leaving the land behind me, too, but what's the land after all, against the music that comes from the far strange places, when the night is on the ground, and the bird in the grass is quiet?" The whole play shows a struggle between remaining on the soil and wanderlust.

"The Land" is concerned with the farming problem in Ireland. At a time when Matt Cosgar's father has purchased the farm on which his family has lived for years, Matt Cosgar succumbs to the lure of America, influenced by Ellen Douras, his sweetheart. Youth is drawn to America; the older people stay on the farm. The land question was a very important one at the time Colum wrote this play. The people were leaving their farms to take up a more prosperous life in the New World. Colum felt this to be a big subject and an issue which could not be overstressed. Strange indeed, it is that Colum later came to America and today figures in the literature of this country, though he at one time believed it the Irishman's duty to remain in his native land.

"Thomas Muskerry" (1910) is an excellent play. Full of pathos, it shows the importance of the family in Ireland. In his dedica-

tion to "Thomas Muskerry", Colum has written that "three characters stood as first types in my human comedy, the peasant, the artist, the official, Murtagh Cosgar, Conn Hourican, Thomas Muskerry." Thomas Muskerry is unforgettably Irish. He is a great sufferer, abandoned by his family in his later life to die a pauper in the workhouse where he had been master. The kindness and good-heartedness of Muskerry to his family are only repaid by their utter hatred and meanness to him at realization that no longer can they depend upon him for maintenance. This play depicts the tragic end of a father who had been forced to feel the injustices of his family when they have turned against him.

In "The Destruction of the Hostel", a play produced by the boys at St. Enda's School, Colum has gone again to the treasury of Irish legends for his story. This play is based upon "The Destruction of the House of Da Derga".

Padraic Colum is a great peasant playwright. He knows the peasantry of Ireland, having lived in their midst for years. He is well able to present plays of the land and peasant countryside, He excels in characterization and local color. Becoming acquainted with Muskerry and Cosgar and Hourican, one cannot imagine these outstanding characters in any other country. Colum presents them as vividly true realistic personalities of the Irish peasantry. The spirit of the soil, of the farm, of the land, is dominant in his plays as well as his poetry. "He is of the dawn not only because he is the youth, at oldest the young man, in his writing, who sees the world freshly and fresh, none the less fresh because he knows it old; but he is of the dawn because it is chiefly those things that are fundamental, that come out of the beginnings of things that interest him profoundly, that stir him deeply. Subtleties and com-

plexities, decadent things are not for him, but simplicities, primiordial things, the love of wandering, and what is only less old, the love of land, and love of woman. These three things, and youth, and little else concern him." * Colum is a realist and, like Synge, has created character wholly natural to Ireland. His dialogue is a clear, excellent, and truly characteristic speech of absolute naturalness. His pictures of the peasant at work, of their Irish problems and misfortunes, are realistically told. He relates them as none but one personally experienced with such could write. As a playwright of folk drama, he is supreme; his reputation rivals only that of Synge.

T. C. MURRAY

T. C. Murray is an outstanding dramatist of the realistic school. He is deeply religious; his plays reflect his devotion to Catholicism; he is the leading Irish Catholic playwright. In the aspect of religion and its reflection in his writings, T. C. Murray is the antithesis of Lennox Robinson, the Protestant.

Of Murray's dramatic contributions, "Birthright", staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1910 and performed by the Irish Players in their tour to America in 1911, is unquestionably the best. It is still one of the most popular at the Abbey Theatre; its revival is constant. "Birthright" is stirring and powerful; it is full of excellent characterization. Maura, the Irish mother, is very appealing and human. The story is based upon the theme of fraternal hatred; the conflict is between brother and brother, husband and wife. It is a variation of the Biblical story of Cain and Abel. In a two-act play, Murray tells of the younger Shane's plans for sailing to America. The father of Bat and Shane Morissey cannot afford to support his two grown sons; so he keeps Hugh at work upon the small farm and makes ready for Shane, the younger son, to depart to

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* Irish Plays and Playwrights - Cornelius Weygandt.

America. Hugh and his father quarrel; whenever work is to be done upon the farm Hugh is not there - something else is demanding his attention. The father decided, in his fury, to send Hugh to America instead of Shane, and orders Shane to relabel the trunk this time with Hugh's name. The intercession of kindly Maura is useless; Shane has to obey. When Hugh comes home and is informed that he must leave Ireland, he will not believe it. For proof, he is shown the trunk label, whereupon he suspects Shane of meanness. A quarrel ensues and develops into a serious struggle which results in Shane's killing Hugh. Tragedy is the whole spirit of the play. It is skilfully constructed, direct and swift.

"Maurice Harte" is another tragedy poignant with realistic Irish life. In this play Murray shows us, in a praiseworthy manner, the effect of parental pride upon the rights of the child. Being a play dealing with parental desire that the son become a priest, it depicts true Irish Catholic life, and for this reason, is as dear to the heart of every Irish Catholic as to the playwright. Maurice Harte is hesitant about leaving home to study at the seminary. It is not his wish that he become a priest. However, so strong is the desire on the part of his parents, and so great have been their sacrifices in his behalf that he takes up his education. Home on a holiday, Maurice begs his Parish Priest, Father Mangan, to inform his peasant parents that their son can no longer continue in his priestly studies. He cannot rightly go on further in his preparation for the priesthood, for he has no vocation. When the priest tells the Hartes of Maurice's position, they insist that he return to Maynooth and continue his studies. Finally, ordination time comes, and we are told of Maurice's high scholastic attainments in his class. All is joyful in the Harte household. Maurice it to be ordained and to return to celebrate Mass in West Cork, at

which ceremony he will marry his brother Owen to Bride Burke. But hopes are shattered; Father Mangan brings word to the Hartes that Maurice is ill and cannot be ordained. Maurice returns home, broken down, ill, on the verge of insanity. It is only then that the parents realize their great error in interfering with their son's choice of vocation.

"Maurice Harte" is a great tragedy of Irish Catholic life; it ranks very high in esteem at the Abbey Theatre. It has not received such universal praise as "Birthright", but it follows closely.

Mr. Murray's fame rests upon the realism revealed in his plays, his utter sincerity in picturing phases in Irish Catholic life, his ability to portray simple peasant characters in a realistic background, and his excellence in dialogue. "Sovereign Love", "Aftermath", "Autumn Fire", "The Pipe in the Fields", and "The Blind Wolf", his latest play, have been staged at the Abbey Theatre. "The Briery Gap", a one-act play, was refused acceptance by the Abbey Theatre because of its theme. As yet the Abbey Theatre - or any theatre in Ireland - will not permit for production plays dealing with moral questions.

LORD DUNSANY

Lord Dunsany, like Bernard Shaw, belongs in reality with the Anglo-Irish Dramatists rather than with the Irish dramatists of today. He was born 1878 in Meath of Anglo-Irish parentage, yet there is little in him distinctively Irish; he is more Anglo-Irish than Irish, except in birthright. Rather than live in Ireland, he chooses to wander to Africa, America, or England. Ireland does not interest him. He is not in sympathy with the Irish Free State and, since its establishment, has not staged a play at the Abbey Theatre.

He does not agree with Ireland's politics, neither does he sanction the social ambitions of her people. It is a curious thing that his sympathies are wholly with England.

Dunsany has contributed much to English literature in the way of plays, novels, and tales of magic. His plays have won much popularity in England and America; however, in his native land, they have not achieved such success. Four of his plays have been staged in the Abbey Theatre. "The Glittering Gate", the first of his plays to be produced at the Abbey Theatre, April 1909, was proof of his great dramatic ability as a playwright. He has written in the manner of Maeterlinck; there is an element of the magic and fantastic in his plays. He did not in "The Glittering Gate", or in any of his plays, seek the magic from old Irish legends, as did Yeats; Irish mythology had little appeal to him. Instead he invented a kingdom of gods from the East, and has colored his plays by introducing these gods of his fantasy into his works.

"A Night at an Inn" is a very powerful one-act play full of fancy, and exceedingly grim; it is a very gripping play, terrifying at times. The plot is based upon the belief that gems in the eyes of idols have a magic power, and Dunsany thrillingly tells the story in an excellent manner, with perfect technique. A ruby is stolen from the head of an Indian idol by the Toff, and his three sailor companions. They are tracked by the priest of Klesh from the Temple. The thieves hire an inn, hoping that by so doing they may capture and murder their followers. All the sailors are given a ruby and each leaves the inn temporarily for pleasure, but returns in great haste, for the priests are at hand. They try to foil the priests' plans by "staging" a struggle; each one attacked falls, and through this artifice the priests are led to believe from

the shadows that each sailor is killed. The Toff sits ready for the attack by the priests and the sailors. The scheme is carried out; the priests are murdered by the sailors who then are happy and high-spirited at their success. Suddenly the idol enters the room, walks to the table, and replaces the ruby in its forehead. Grimly it passes out of the room; calls the name of each sailor from outside and kills each in turn. Finally the name of "Mestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman" is called by the idol, and Toff meets death in the same manner as the sailors. Great indeed is the attention of an audience upon this play. Dunsany has demonstrated great power in thrilling his audience, holding them spellbound. Terror and magic are cleverly interwoven in this short play, but it is for dramatic effectiveness that the play is really appreciated. "The Night at an Inn" has been very popular in America in connection with the Little Theatre Movement. It was produced at the Abbey Theatre September 2, 1919, but since then, its staging at that theatre has been rare.

"The Tent of the Arabs" - staged in Dublin for the first time, following its production at Paris and London, is another short play of Lord Dunsany's which has won great popularity for its author. In this two-act play, Dunsany has made use of the love theme and an Oriental setting. For beauty, it surpasses all of his plays, and in dramatic technique ranks high.

"King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" is excellent in dialogue and technique, yet it is the one play in which the aristocratic spirit of its author is most evident. Dunsany shows himself to be the master - "he cracks the whip" - for this attitude shown in "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior" he has been bitterly criticized.

Dunsany's connection with the Irish Dramatic movement has been

of small consequence to the theatre of Ireland. So Anglo-Saxon is Dunsany in all his literary endeavors, social and political aspirations, that he forgets his own country and looks indifferently at all its enterprises, literary or otherwise. The Abbey Theatre did stage "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior", "The Glittering Gate", "A Night at the Inn" and "The Tent of the Arabs". Though the group of actors at the Abbey Theatre was doubtless the best of any English speaking theatre, they failed to impress Irish audiences with Dunsany's plays; Britain and the United States are the countries where he has been most appreciated, but his fame in other countries is constantly increasing.

SEAN O'CASEY

The most popular dramatist of the Abbey Theatre today is Sean O'Casey. He is the playwright whose works will influence dramatists of the future school of Irish drama. He has contributed further to the proof of George Moore's prophecy that realism will continue to hold sway at the Abbey Theatre.

The plays of O'Casey are based upon life in the slums of Dublin and upon incidents in present day history with which Irishmen are very familiar. O'Casey handles themes of this sort, weaves, into the somewhat disjointed plots, elements of tragedy, humor, and satire, and caricatures the Irishman in such a way that he laughs at himself. He is a realist and a satirist; as a laborer he is well acquainted with the life he portrays. He has been a newsboy, a brick-layer, a factory hand, a student of slum life in Dublin. Now he is known to be the most prominent dramatist of the Irish theatre. His plays are most enthusiastically received in Ireland and in England. Announcement that one of his plays is to be staged at the Abbey Theatre means that crowds will be refused

admittance. In America, however, his plays are treated coldly.

O'Casey made eight attempts to have plays accepted by the Abbey Theatre before his first play was favorably considered by them. In April, 1923, O'Casey's first play "The Shadow of a Gunman" was produced. It won great favor; the house was packed for weeks, and the name of O'Casey became popular in an instant. "The Shadow of a Gunman" approaches melodrama, but the outstanding characters, Minnie Powell, Davoren, Maguire, and Shields, are unforgetable.

Other successes of O'Casey's have been "Cathleen Listens-in" (1923), "Juno and the Paycock" (1924), "Nannie's Night Out" (1924), and "The Plough and the Stars" (1926), which evoked much criticism because it was believed to satirize too strongly the social and political life of Ireland and to belittle the men who were executed in the strife of 1906. Animosity in regard to this play has ceased; the performance no longer agitates riots. O'Casey has established his reputation; his present popularity is great; his future, more promising, and his influence is felt, not only in Ireland, but in every country where English is understood.

THE IRISH THEATRE

The names of the brothers William and Frank Fay, already referred to, are memorable for the establishment of strength and success in the Irish Literary Theatre. Found by W. B. Yeats, they gave potency to his enterprise and were veritably responsible for its astounding results. Frank Fay was a diseur; William, a comedian. Together they created the characters of the plays of Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge, and by their excellent acting, producing, and teaching, brought into existence the Dublin School of Acting and the Abbey Theatre. William Fay in 1904 became manager and producer of this newly organized Abbey Theatre which was opened on account

of the generosity of Miss A. E. F. Horniman. Later the Fays separated from the Abbey Theatre and severed relations with it. An Englishman, Alfred Waring, became manager after the departure of the Fays. Connal O'Riordan, ("Norreys Connell") and Nugent Monck were producers until 1909 when S. Lennox Robinson was named producer and manager. Robinson's influence upon the Abbey Theatre has been great. He advocated principles similar to those of Edward Martyn and believed that the Abbey Theatre should be modelled after the English Repertory Theatre. Other managers who have controlled this theatre have been A. Patrick Wilson, St. John G. Ervine, J. Augustus Keogh, Fred O'Donovan, Sara Allgood, and Michael J. Dolan, an actor, and a director of a dramatic school, who has assumed the managership since 1923, independent of the producing. The producing is cared for by Lennox Robinson, and Arthur Shields, an actor.

The Abbey Theatre has not been surpassed in acting by any contemporary theatre. Its only possible rival is the Moscow Art Theatre. The Abbey Theatre actors are responsible for the remarkable fame of their theatre; it is they who have popularized the name Abbey Theatre. Sara Allgood, the greatest tragedienne of the Abbey group, trained under the directorship of William Fay, has achieved great success since 1904. Her sister, Maire O'Neill, came to the company to take the romantic roles, and likewise became renowned for her excellent interpretations and acting. Maire NicShuibhlaigh's greatest accomplishment was her tragic part as Moll Woods in O'Kelley's play, "The Shuiler's Child". Like Sara Allgood, she is most talented in tragic roles. Of these three great actresses Sara Allgood is the most versatile. She is just as capable in a romantic and gay role as in a tragic one. Two of her greatest successes were Kathleen in "Kathleen ni Houlihan", and Deirdre in Yeats's

play. At the present time Sara Allgood is engaged in musical comedy with an English company. Her loss to the Abbey Theatre is gravely felt. She is capable of greater achievement than musical comedy can afford her; it is hoped she will return to the theatre which she made famous, and be reassured of universal praise from critics as the greatest tragedienne of the Abbey Theatre.

Arthur Sinclair, J. M. Kerrigan, Fred O'Donovan, J. A. O'Rourke, and Sydney Morgan became the leading actors of the Abbey Theatre when the Fay brothers left the group. Arthur Sinclair is the outstanding of the male actors. With versatility equal to that of Sara Allgood, Sinclair is able to be a tragedian and a comedian. He prefers the roles of the latter and in that he is remembered. With the Abbey players during their tour to America, Miss Allgood and Mr. Sinclair attained great distinction and were offered positions by American producers. They showed their preferment, however, by remaining with the Irish group. Sinclair has nobly played the part of Fary Farrell in "Spreading the News", by Lady Gregory, the Wise Man in "The Hour Glass", Yeats's play, great in dramatic effectiveness, Shane Morrissey, in T. C. Murray's "Birthright", Conchubar in "Deirdre" by Synge, and John Rainey in St. John G. Ervine's "Mixed Marriage".

The acting of the Abbey Players has been distinguished for its naturalness. Realism is the essence of their art. As actors they do not stress their actions; they permit the audience to participate by allowing situation to govern their motions and feelings rather than the contrary. They are permitted by their managers "to 'get up' their parts from their own ideas". *

Placidity, reserve, and beautiful speaking are characteristics of their acting. The acting does not seem to be acting, so natural is it. "Realism in acting could go no further; voice, looks, gest-

* Irish Plays and Playwrights - Cornelius Weygandt.

ures, movement were all controlled as by perfect mechanism, and were all subordinated to the total effect that was sought. The individual members of the company, too, were subordinated to the team, and there were no stars, no playing for prominence. *

A few favorable and unfavorable criticisms appearing in American periodicals during the tour of the Abbey Players to the United States give an indication of the sentiment aroused. Lady Gregory considered the visit a great success; the Abbey Theatre Players were warmly received for the most part, and each member at the close, felt gratified to America for its hospitality and support.

From "America".

THE PLAYS OF THE "IRISH" PLAYERS

November 4, 1911:--The editors, like the patriots of the Boyle O'Reilly Club who feted him in Boston, took Mr. Yeats at his own none too modest estimation. The United Irish Societies of this city denounced "The Playboy" and an advanced Gaelic organ exposed its barbarities, but gave a clean bill of health to Mr. Yeats and the rest of his programme. Doubtless they also had not read the plays they approved. Well, we have read them. We found several among them more vile, more false, and far more dangerous than "The Playboy", the 'bestial depravity' of which carries its own condemnation; and we deliberately pronounce them the most malignant travesty of Irish character and of all that is sacred in Catholic life that has come out of Ireland, The details, which are even more shocking than those of "The Playboy", are too indecent for citation, but the persistent mendacity of the Yeats press agency's clever conspiracy of puff makes it needful to give our readers some notion of their character.

Of Synge's plays only "Riders to the Sea", an un-Irish adaptation to Connacht fishermen of Loti's "Pecheur D'Islande",

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* The Irish Drama - Andrew F. Malone.

is fit for a decent audience. None but the most rabidly anti-Catholic, priest-hating bigots could enjoy "The Tinker's Wedding". The plot, which involves an Irish priest in companionship with the most degraded pagans and hinges on his love of gain, may not be even outlined by a self-respecting pen. The open lewdness and foul suggestiveness of the language is so revolting, the picture of the Irish priesthood, drawn by this parson's son, is so vile and insulting, and the mockery of the Mass and sacraments so blasphemous, that it is unthinkable how any man of healthy mind could father it or expect an audience to welcome it. This is the "typical Irish play" which the "Irish Players" have presented to a Boston audience.

From "The Gaelic American"

YEATS'S ANTI-IRISH CAMPAIGN.

November 8, 1911:--The anti-Irish players come to New York on Nov. 20th, and will appear first in some of the other plays. The Playboy, it is announced, will be given later, but the date has not yet been given out. The presentation of the monstrosity is a challenge to the Irish people of New York which will be taken up. There will be no parleying with theatre managers, or appeals to Lady Gregory's sense of decency. "The Playboy" must be squelched, as the stage Irishman was squelched, and a lesson taught to Mr. Yeats and his fellow-agents of England that they will remember while they live.

When a woman chooses to put herself in the company of male blackguards she has no right to appeal for respect for her sex, MRS. MARY F. McWHORTER, NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, L. A., A. O. H., IRISH HISTORY COMMITTEE, WRITING IN "THE NATIONAL HIBERNIAN", 1913.

When it was announced about two months ago that the Abbey Players would appear in repertory at the Fine Arts Theatre, in the

city of Chicago, I made up my mind to witness all of the Abbey output, if possible, and see if they were as black as some painted them, and now I feel I have earned the right to quality as a critic.

Having seen them all, I have this to say, that, with one or two exceptions, they are the sloppiest, and in most cases the vilest, and the most character-assassinating things, in the shape of plays it has ever been my misfortune to see. If, as has been often stated, the plays were written with the intention of belittling the Irish race and the ideals and traditions of that race, the playwrights have succeeded as far as they intended, for the majority of the plays leave us nothing to our credit.

Thinking the matter over now, I cannot understand why "The Playboy" was picked out as the most dangerous to our ideals. True, "The Playboy" is bad and very bad, but it is so glaringly so, it defeats its own ends by causing a revulsion of feeling.

There are other plays in the collection, however, that are apparently harmless; comedies that will cause you to laugh heartily, 'tis true, but in the middle of the laugh you stop as if some one slapped you in the face. You begin to see, in place of harmless joke, an insidious dig at something you hold sacred, or, if it is something you think is inspiring and patriotic, right in the midst of the thing that carries you away for a few moments on the wings of your lofty dreams and inspirations some monster of mockery will intrude his ugly face, and again the doubt, "Is it ridicule?" The certainty follows the doubt quickly, and you know it is ridicule, and immediately you are possessed of an insane desire to seek out Lady Gregory or some one else connected with the plays and then and there commit murder. Of course, if you are

careless, or in some cases ignorant of the history of Ireland, or unfamiliar with the conditions there, you will accept the teaching of the Abbey school, and say to yourself, "The Irish are a lazy, crafty, miserly, insincere, irreligious lot after all."

In "The Rising of the Moon", our patriotism is attacked, not openly, of course, but by innuendo. We are made to appear everything but what we are. The policy of "Let well enough alone", is the keynote of this play, bringing out the avarice and selfishness that, according to the Abbey school, is a part of our nature.

It has often been said by our enemies that to have a priest in the family is to be considered very respectable by the average Irish Catholic family, and to bring about this desired result we are willing to sell our immortal souls. All this, not from motives of piety, but to be considered respectable.

In the play "Maurice Harte" this is brought out very forcibly. The family sacrifices everything to keep the candidate for the priest-hood in college. The candidate has no vocation, but he is not consulted at all. When this poor, spineless creature sees the members of the family have set their hearts upon his becoming a priest he lets matters drift till the day set for his ordination, and then we behold him going made. All very far-fetched.

We do admit that we like to have a priest in the family - what Irish mother but will cherish this hope in her bosom for at least one of her sons, or that one of the daughters of the house will become the spouse of Christ? Not, however, from such an unworthy motive as to be considered respectable, but from the pure motive of serving Almighty God.

The "Workhouse Ward" gives you nothing more edifying than the picture of two hateful old men snarling at each other in a

truly disgusting manner.

"Coats" gives the picture of two seedy, down-at-elbows editors, who, while apparently the best of friends, still are thinking unutterable things at each other.

"Kathleen Ni Houlihan" is beautiful, but every one knows Yeats wrote this before he became a pagan and went astray. His "Countess Cathleen", written since then, is a weird thing. One can see he strives after his early ideals, but it is a failure, for who can picture a sincere, devout Catholic lady calmly selling her soul to the devil, even though it is to purchase the souls of her poor dependents. And it is a rather dangerous lesson it teaches to the weak-minded, when the angel comes to console the weeping peasantry after the countess dies. Supposedly in damnation, he tells them she is saved, because of the good intention she had in selling her soul to Old Nick.

"The Magnanimous Lover" presents the nasty problem play. Of course our humiliation would not be complete without the "problem play". And the words that this play puts in the mouth of the Irish peasant girl! My blood boiled as I listened. What on earth do our Irish peasants know about the nasty problems so much effected by certain writers of today? American newspaper correspondents have commented from time to time on the chastity of the Irish peasants, and even the hostile ones have marvelled at the complete absence of immoral among them. But what is that to the Irish National (?) dramatists? Lady Gregories in the world will not be able to destroy an atom of our splendid heritage.

MARY BOYLE O'REILLY IN THE BOSTON "SUNDAY POST"

October 8, 1911:--In two short weeks the Irish Players have done great and lasting service to every lover of Synge's Irish in

Boston; a service long to be held in grateful memory, a creative force of other good to come. Very gravely and conscientiously, Lady Gregory and Mr. William Butler Yeats have trained their players to interpret to the children of Irish emigrants the brave and beautiful and touching memories which, through the ignorance of the second generation, have ceased to be cause for gratitude or pride.

Not this alone: by their fine art, the players have dealt a death blow to the coarse and stupid burlesque of the traditional stage Irishman, who has, for years, outraged every man and women of Celtic ancestry by gorilla-like buffoonery and grotesque attempts at brogue.

Boston owes Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats and their company not only grateful thanks, but a very humble apology.

From "THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL"

October 26, 1912:--It is time the Dublin public pulled itself together and began to take pride in its National Theatre, this theatre which has produced in a few years more than a hundred plays and a company of players recognized as true artists, not only by their fellow-countrymen, but by the critics of England and America. The Abbey Theatre has made it possible for a writer living in Ireland and writing on Irish subjects to win a position of equal dignity with his fellow-artist in London or Paris; it has made it possible for an Irish man or woman with acting ability to play and earn a decent living and win a position of equal respect with any English or Continental actor.

From "NEW YORK JOURNAL"

December 18, 1911:--The hysterics and rowdyism that attended the opening of the Irish plays in New York having died away, listen to

a few facts concerning the extremely interesting and valuable work of Lady Gregory and her associates, the Irish playwrights and actors.

Some of those entirely ignorant of that which they discussed thought that the Irish players were wilfully irreligious, and others equally ignorant thought that they were weakly lacking in Irish patriotism.

As a matter of fact, the Irish playwrights and actors....are thoroughly imbued with the Irish spirit and are trying as well as they can to present certain Irish conditions and characters as they are, utilizing literature and the drama as mediums....It was thought by some good people who had not seen the plays that they were irreligious in character and showed lack of respect especially for the Catholic faith. But this is not true.

In the play called "Mixed Marriage" all the bigotry and religious stupidity is shown by the old Protestant father. The unselfishness, real patriotism, courage, and broad-minded humanity in this play are the possession of the Catholics--as is, indeed, usually the case in Ireland.

It is interesting to observe how real merit wins and overcomes ignorant prejudice.

Many of the very men that hissed and hooted at the Irish plays on the first night without listening to them now attend the performances regularly.

Those that enjoy most thoroughly the wonderful wit and pathos of the Irish race, as shown in these plays, are those Irish men and women.

Sara Allgood, as the old patient wife and mother in "Mixed Marriage" is a perfect picture of the womanhood that has created Ireland.

Lady Gregory and her friends have rendered a real service to this country and to Ireland by bringing the plays here.

FUTURE OF IRISH DRAMA

The hopes and aspirations of the founders of the Abbey Theatre have been fulfilled; the success of their enterprise has been proved. The playwrights laid the roots of their foundation in folk-life and appealed to the imagination of Ireland and its lovers through the source of Celtic mythology. The Abbey Players staged the dramas and won the hearts of the Irish people by their excellent exhibitions of histrionic ability. Plays and players delighted.

In contrast with the ideals of the first movement of the Irish National Theatre, the Abbey Theatre did not aim for literary effects and a drama of ideas; it strove to stress the folk elements in order that the drama of Ireland might be nationalized, that the theatre might be revivified, and firmly and permanently established. Yeats, Edward Martyn, and George Moore represent the dramatists of the literary influence. Yeats, the poet, influenced the theatre of Ireland greatly; Martyn and Moore, the two playwrights whose ideals were opposed to the standards of the other founders, withdrew. The present tendencies of the Abbey Theatre show that Moore's and Martyn's ideals are not forgotten; today (at the Abbey Theatre) are acted plays which are European in tone and less notional in spirit. The folk play is not sufficient; Irish audiences are demanding more contact with things non-Irish, which they can weigh from their own Irish viewpoint and Irish philosophy of life. In this respect Irish drama today differs from that of the first school. This broadening effect will greatly benefit its theatre. Already the location of plays is noticeably different; Irish playwrights are changing from a purely Irish setting to one less familiar. The traits of human nature found to be possessed

by characters set into action in a foreign land are just as typically human, as those of the characters living in an Irish background, the people have learned. No longer is it necessary for Ireland to be restricted to a drama connected solely with Gaelic atmosphere, Celtic mythology, and Irish history; its concentration can be upon the exterior, since its own veritably Irish drama has been contributed to literature.

The Irish drama of the future will continue to be represented by such able writers as Lennox Robinson, Brinsley MacNamara, T. C. Murray, and George Fitzmaurice of the older group. Among the younger dramatists are Sean O'Casey, who already has achieved great success, Kenneth Sarr, Dorothy Macardle, Arthur Power, and M. C. Madden. These playwrights, with the exception of O'Casey, may still be obscure; nevertheless they are the hope of Ireland. The future of the theatre depends upon them and upon others whose names have yet to be read by the producers and managers of the theatres. Out of the darkness may come another Yeats, another Synge, another Colum. Who these great dramatists will be is unknown. All that can be said regarding the outlook for Irish drama, as far as dramatists are concerned, is that high standards of attainment will be demanded of each promising playwright. To win a place in the Irish dramatic hall of fame will be difficult. The raising of standards will cause to be rejected a dramatist who, twenty or twenty-five years ago, had he attempted to gain recognition, would have met little difficulty. But with such a valuable basic list of excellent and prolific playwrights of Ireland, the endeavor on the part of the newer dramatists for achievement will be more arduous. Future theatrical enterprises will depend upon the questions of most significance. Will the play be limited in scope? Will it

ignore the drama of ideas, of intellectualism, such as Edward Martyn constantly upheld, or will it exhibit human nature, sacrifice talk for action, appeal to the realist and the romanticist, and above all, still remain racy of the soil of Ireland? Whatever its limitations may have been, its outlook is most promising. It heralds a future as great as its past, significantly based upon a drama illumined with subject matter, characterization, wit, local color, human appeal, dramatic effectiveness and language.

SUMMARY

Modern Irish playwrights are indebted to the ancient literature of Ireland for the old legends, historic tales, and the delightful folk-lore which have served as a great literary inspiration to the majority of Irish dramatists. Delving into this antiquarian treasury, they have revealed the history of Ireland. Such study gives insight into the characteristics of the Gaelic people, their instincts, their admirable traits and qualities, their limitations. The fact that Ireland reached a high state of civilization in times most ancient cannot be overstressed. Christianity reached Ireland in 432, and following its advent Ireland became a great literary country, and was known as "the land of saints and scholars". The influence of Irish literature, Irish learning, and culture, in general, was greatly felt on the continent. Until the decline of Irish development at the time of the Danish invasions and the Norman Conquest, Ireland was the criterion for all things intellectual and cultural.

During the great period of Celtic literary production, writers based their works upon the romances of an earlier period. The Ulster cycle and the Ossianic cycle contain epics, and romances about the great heroes of ancient Ireland. It is to these cycles that Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory, and other dramatists have gone for

themes. The beautiful story of Deirdre belongs to the Ulster cycle of the heroic sagas. The Fenian or Ossianic cycle abounds in ballads, lullabies, tales of Finn, fairy stories, and stories of adventure. The excellence of subject matter and material for plays has been recognized in the Irish folk-lore; numerous Irish playwrights have understood the value of these, not only to themselves as a background for drama, but to the patriotic and romantic Irish race. This foresight on the part of the dramatist has to a great extent accounted for his popularity.

The literature flourished through the centuries despite the handicaps, oppressions, and turmoil. Famine and persecutions, however, prevented Ireland from obtaining again the position formerly held. The policies of England checked civilization and learning. What comparatively few writers appeared in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries wrote chiefly history stressing religion, and lyric poetry of a melancholy note. Of this period O'Hussey, Keating, MacFirbis, and O'Clery are the most representative. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Ireland underwent a literary awakening. Attempts to revive the spirit of nationality in all matters pertaining to her language were effected. The oppression of England upon the island had been so utterly severe that Ireland lost her language privilege, her religious freedom, and was in a state of calamity. A revival of learning was necessary to bring the country back to a state of normalcy in literature, as well as in social and political matters. The rebirth of Celtic spirit emphasized the study of Gaelic, research in folk-lore in literature in Irish legendary history, and in all things Irish.

Of greatest importance in the Irish literary renaissance was

the revival of Celtic mythology and folk-lore. The myths and legends of the country were studied; the fairies, elves, and magic people in whom the Gaelic people had belief, were read about in the works preserved by the scholars. With the study of the romantic elements in Irish literature came observations of the native instincts of the Irish as a race. These observations show them to be lovers of learning, extremely given to wit and wisdom, possessors of a faculty for humor, deeply religious, fond of music and poetry, highly imaginative, and great lovers of nature. Traits such as these are reflected in the literature of Irish writers contributing to English literature as well as to that of their own country.

Irish contributors to English literature have been extremely numerous. Few writers, however, employed the English language for purely Irish benefit and wrote to any great extent of the Irish soil. Wentworth, Dillon, Boyle, Denham, Tate, Brady, Farquhar, and Steele, were Irishment who brought eminence to England. On the other hand, Thomas Moore, Oscar Wilde, and Maria Edgeworth, though contributing to English literature, received inspirations from things Irish. Thomas Moore greatly aided in the early days of the revival movement by writing melodious lyrics. A distinctive group of novelists:-Samuel Lover, Charles Lever, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Gerald Griffin, as well as the poets, William Allingham, and Aubrey de Vere upheld the ideals of Moore and his followers.

The Celtic revival progressed. A distinctively Irish national literature written in the English language was recreated. The founding of the Gaelic League in 1893 at Dublin served as a stimulus to the promoters of the Celtic Renaissance. Its purpose that of

reviving and preserving the Irish language, old Irish culture, literature and ideals, was strictly adhered to. Under the able leadership of Douglas Hyde, the fast decaying national spirit was revived.

Strange, the drama as a form of literature, was absent in Ireland until the Gaelic reawakening. A really Irish theatre, purely Irish in character, was missing. Reasons accounting for the absence of the drama are lack of curiosity on the part of the people, their Puritanic attitude toward the stage, political and social hindrances, and the prevalence of domestic bards and shanachies. Impulse for the drama came as a result of the Irish Renaissance; a new school of poets and dramatists appeared and Ireland was given its first drama. W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, John Millington Synge, George Russell are among those who established the Irish dramatic movement in 1899. The Irish Literary Theatre, from which movement later sprang the Abbey Theatre, came into existence as one of the theatres created to meet the dramatic need. In 1904 aided financially by Miss A. E. F. Horniman, the real beginning of the Irish theatre was established with the founding of the Abbey Theatre. The prime spirits in the creation of the Abbey Theatre were William and Frank Fay.

The playwrights of the Abbey Theatre treated folk themes and wrote of the life with which they were familiar. Most representative of the modern school of dramatics was the playwright William Butler Yeats. A poet and dramatist, he was considered the literary genius of his period. He wrote verse plays on the legendary history of Ireland. "The Land of Heart's Desire", "Countess Cathleen", "Kathleen ni Houlihan", "Deirdre", and "The King's Threshold" are among his best known works. Yeats was primarily a poet; he became

absorbed in the Irish Literary Revival and turned to dramatic poetry and later to dramatic prose. His dramas are especially high in poetic qualities, and show his great love and interest in the magic. His influence upon the younger dramatists has been remarkable. As director of the Abbey Theatre he showed himself to be a leader of power.

Lady Gregory, a founder of the Abbey Theatre, wrote short folk-plays. Among her best known farces and comedies are: "Spreading the News", "Hyacinth Halvey", "The Rising of the Moon", and "The Workhouse Ward". Lady Gregory's plays are racy of the soil, and full of Kiltartan dialect; they mirror to the peasantry things familiar. Her untiring efforts in behalf of the Abbey Theatre are commendable. She directed the theatre for a number of years and sponsored the tour of the Abbey Players to America.

The greatest genius of the Irish theatre is John Millington Synge. "Riders to the Sea" and "The Playboy of the Western World" are permanent contributions to the English language. "Riders to the Sea", a gripping tragedy of life in the Aran Islands which Synge knew from his observations and life in that section, is a one-act play telling of the sorrow of Maurya at the loss of six sons to the sea. "The Playboy of the Western World" brought much fame to him. It is the best of his comedies, delightful for its humor, racy Irish idiom, characterization, and ingenious plot. The fight over "The Playboy" in Ireland and America resulted in Synge's being raised from obscurity to fame and the Abbey Theatre's popularity becoming assured. "Deirdre of the Sorrows" based upon old legend of Deirdre, is an exceedingly beautiful story as told by Synge. No other dramatist has surpassed him in the treatment of this sad tale. Other creditable dramatic works include "The

Tinker's Wedding", "The Well of the Saints", and "In the Shadow of the Glen". Synge's prose work "The Aran Islands" depicts his life and observations in the islands off the west coast of Ireland near Galway. Synge is the justification of the Irish Literary Theatre. He is an artist of greatness, strength, and power; beauty in dialect, and skill in technique are his. His use of painted pictures, skill in mastery of words, and in the development of character are superb.

Edward Martyn sponsored the Irish Literary movement. He contributed financially to its support and offered plays for production, "The Heather Field", and "Maeve", being the most successful. Martyn's world was one of conflict between materialism and idealism. He held that Irish drama should not deal wholly with folk life; he believed in the drama of ideas. An enthusiast of Ibsen, he hoped to bring Irish drama in contact with European culture and thereby raise its ideals. Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats believed that the folk drama was the sort Ireland needed; the drawing room play, such as Martyn advocated, would have no appeal to the peasantry. A conflict ensued. Martyn withdrew from the movement and later established a theatre of his own, producing intellectual plays and exerting influence upon the younger dramatists.

George Moore assisted in founding the Irish Theatre, influenced by his intimate friend, Edward Martyn. He had traveled in London and Paris, until the age of forty-two he returned to Ireland to give it a new literature and language. "The Bending of the Bough", a rewriting of Martyn's "A Tale of a Town", and "Diarmuid and Grania" are his only plays produced by the Irish Literary Theatre. Moore and Martyn were of the same opinion regarding the standards of Irish drama. Moore, however, was not Irish in sympathy; he de-

lighted in reviling his country and his religion; consequently, he brought bitter criticism upon himself in Ireland and was thought an evil influence for his antipathy to things Irish.

A mystical poet turned dramatist was George Russell. "Deirdre", a play of decoration rather than of dramatic effectiveness, is his principal contribution to drama. He has won fame as a poet chiefly. His influence upon Irish writers has been greatly felt, however, for he makes use of the supernatural and folk-lore of Ireland. He is the interpreter of the Ireland of peace; he is the possessor of the world beyond this world.

A very promising young dramatist who died in 1919 at the height of great success was Seumas O'Kelley. As playwright, novelist, short-story writer, he contributed much to Irish literature. Most widely known and most successful of his dramatic achievements are "The Shuiler's Child", a thesis play which deals with the sordid of life, "The Bribe", a social play, and "The Parnellite" a realistic play, based upon the deception and injustices which effected the downfall of Parnell. O'Kelley, like Martyn, was influenced by Ibsen; in his works can be detected an element of the tragic, the serious and the sombre. By the death of O'Kelley, Irish drama was deprived of many works, doubtless superior to all his previous literary endeavors.

"The Magnanimous Lover" and "Mixed Marriage" are plays typical of the optimism of this North of Ireland playwright, St. John G. Ervine, but his finest play is "John Ferguson". Ervine's greatest ability as a dramatist is in characterization and dramatic effectiveness. A tinge of satire is often detected in his plays.

Lennox Robinson is the most prolific and most important of the younger dramatists. "The Whiteheaded Boy", a satirical comedy

is known throughout the English speaking world as the finest comedy written since the death of Synge. Robinson is to be depended upon to write even greater drama; his fine satirical genius will carry him to futher heights, undoubtedly.

Other dramatists of note are: Padraic Colum, a great peasant playwright, to be remembered for such plays as "Thomas Muskerry", and "The Hand"; T. C. Murray, the leading Catholic dramatist, very popular at the Abbey Theatre as the author of "Birthright" and "Maurice Harte", a realistic tragedy of Irish Catholic life; Lord Dunsany, the Anglo-Irish dramatist and master of technique, whose powerful one-act play of fantasy--"A Night at an Inn" grips and terrifies its audience; and the writer of Dublin slum life, Sean O'Casey, whose dramas are responsible for his being acclaimed the most popular dramatist of the Abbey Theatre today.

The Abbey Theatre has been managed by such able directors as William Fay, Alfred Waring, Connal O'Riordan, Lennox Robinson, St. John G. Ervine, and Sara Allgood. It has won great fame for its school of actors. As a group none has ever surpassed the Abbey Theatre Players; the only possible rival of the Abbey Theatre is the Moscow Art. Actors and actresses of note who have brought fame to this theatre are William and Frank Fay, Sara Allgood, the tragedienne, Maire O'Neill, Maire Nic Schuibhlaigh, Arthur Sinclair, J. M. Kerrigan, Fred O'Donovan, and Sydney Morgan. Naturalness, realism, placidity, reserve and beautiful speaking are qualities common to the Abbey actors. The whole enterprise of the Abbey Theatre has been extremely successful. The Irish people have thoroughly appreciated their new drama and the Abbey Players. The hopes and aspirations of W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory have been fulfilled. Tendencies today point to a drama more cosmopoli-

tan and democratic than the former folk-plays. Edward Martyn's ambition for a theatre which will produce plays of current interest and not essentially Irish, will be achieved. The hope of the future lies in such dramatists as Lennox Robinson, Sean O'Casey, Kenneth Sarr, Dorothy Macardle, and Arthur Power. Ireland has a drama, a theatre, high standards and ideals. Its outlook is promising; it heralds a future as great as its past.

PLAYS WRITTEN BY THOSE PLAYWRIGHTS INCLUDED IN THIS ESSAY AND PRODUCED BY THE ABBEY THEATRE COMPANY AND ITS PREDECESSORS WITH DATES OF FIRST PERFORMANCES

IRISH LITERARY THEATRE AT ANTIENT CONCERT ROOMS

May 8th, 1899.	"The Countess Cathleen."	W. B. Yeats
May 9th, 1899.	"The Heather Field."	Edward Martyn

IRISH LITERARY AT THE GAIETY THEATRE

Feb. 19th, 1900.	"The Bending of the Bough."	George Moore
Feb. 20th, 1900.	"Maeve"	Edward Martyn
Oct. 21st, 1901.	"Diarmuid and Grania."	W. B. Yeats and George Moore
Oct. 21st, 1901.	"The Twisting of the Rope." (The first Gaelic Play produced in any Theatre.)	Douglas Hyde

Mr. W. G. Fay's IRISH NATIONAL DRAMATIC COMPANY AT ST. TERESA'S HALL, CLARENDON STREET

Apr. 2nd, 1902.	"Deirdre."	"A. E."
Apr. 2nd, 1902.	"Kathleen Ni Houlihan"	W. B. Yeats

IRISH NATIONAL DRAMATIC COMPANY AT ANTIENT CONCERT ROOMS

Oct. 30th, 1902.	"A Pot of Broth"	W. B. Yeats

IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY, MOLESWORTH HALL

Mar. 14th, 1903.	"The Hour Glass."	W. B. Yeats
Mar. 14th, 1903.	"Twenty-five."	Lady Gregory
Oct. 8th, 1903.	"The King's Threshold."	J. M. Synge

Oct. 8th, 1903.	"In the Shadow of the Glen."	J. M. Synge
Dec. 3rd, 1903.	"Broken Soil."	Padraic Colum
Jan. 14th, 1904.	"The Shadowy Waters."	W. B. Yeats
Jan. 14th, 1904.	"The Townland of Tamney."	Seumas McManus
Feb. 25th, 1904.	"Riders to the Sea."	J. M. Synge

IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY AT THE ABBEY THEATRE

Dec. 27th, 1904.	"On Baile's Strand."	W. B. Yeats
Dec. 27th, 1904.	"Spreading the News."	Lady Gregory
Feb. 4th, 1905.	"The Well of the Saints."	J. M. Synge
Mar. 25th, 1905.	"Kincora."	Lady Gregory
June 9th, 1905.	"The Land."	Padraic Colum

NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY, LTD. (ABBEY COMPANY)

Dec. 9th, 1905.	"The White Cockade."	Lady Gregory
Feb. 19th, 1906.	"Hyacinth Halvey."	Lady Gregory
Oct. 20th, 1906.	"The Gaol Gate."	Lady Gregory
Nov. 24th, 1906.	"Deirdre."	W. B. Yeats
Dec. 8th, 1906.	"The Canavans."	Lady Gregory
Dec. 8th, 1906.	"New Version of 'The Shadowy Waters.'"	W. B. Yeats
Jan. 26th, 1907.	"The Playboy of the Western World."	J. M. Synge
Feb. 23rd, 1907.	"The Jackdaw."	Lady Gregory
Mar. 9th, 1907.	"The Rising of the Moon."	Lady Gregory
Apr. 3rd, 1907.	"The Poorhouse."	Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory
Oct. 31st, 1907.	"Dervorgilla."	Lady Gregory
Nov. 21st, 1907.	"The Unicorn from the Stars."	W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory
Feb. 13th, 1908.	"The Piper."	Norreys Connell
Mar. 19th, 1908.	"The Golden Helmet."	W. B. Yeats
Apr. 20th, 1908.	"The Workhouse Ward."	Lady Gregory
Oct. 8th, 1908.	"The Clancy Name."	Lennox Robinson

Feb. 11th, 1909.	Revised Version "Kincora"	Lady Gregory
Apr. 1st, 1909.	"The Cross Roads."	Lennox Robinson
Apr. 1st, 1909.	"Time."	Norreys Connell
Apr. 29th, 1909.	"The Glittering Gate."	Lord Dunsany
May 27th, 1909.	"An Imaginary Conversation."	Norreys Connell
Aug. 25th, 1909.	"The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet."	Bernard Shaw
Nov. 11th, 1909.	"The Image."	Lady Gregory
Jan. 13th, 1910.	"Deirdre of the Sorrows."	J. M. Synge
Feb. 10th, 1910.	"The Green Helmet."	W. B. Yeats
Mar. 2nd, 1910.	"The Traveling Man."	Lady Gregory
May 12th, 1910.	"Thomas Muskerry."	Padraic Colum
May 26th, 1910.	"Harvest."	Lennox Robinson
Oct. 27th, 1910.	"Birthright."	T. C. Murray
Nov. 10th, 1910.	"The Full Moon."	Lady Gregory
Nov. 24th, 1910.	"The Shuiler's Child."	Seumas O'Kelley
Dec. 1st, 1910.	"Coats."	Lady Gregory
Jan. 12th, 1911.	"The Deliverer."	Lady Gregory
Jan. 26th, 1911.	"King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior."	Lord Dunsany
Feb. 16th, 1911.	"The Land of Heart's Desire."	W. B. Yeats
Mar. 30th, 1911.	"Mixed Marriage."	St. John Ervine
Nov. 30th, 1911..	"The Marriage."	Douglas Hyde
Dec. 14th, 1911.	"Revival of 'The Countess Cathleen'"	W. B. Yeats
Jan. 11, 1912.	"MacDarragh's Wife."	Lady Gregory
Feb. 1912.	"The Tinker and the Fairy." (played in Gaelic)	Douglas Hyde
Apr. 11th, 1912.	"Patriots."	Lennox Robinson
June 20th, 1912.	"Maurice Harte."	T. C. Murray
July 4th, 1912.	"The Bogie Man."	Lady Gregory
Oct. 17th, 1912.	"The Magnanimous Lover."	St. John Ervine
Nov. 21st, 1912.	"Damer's Gold."	Lady Gregory

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